



August 23. 1670.

IT is Ordered by the Lords of His Majesties most Honourable Privy Council, That none shall Re-print, or Import this Book of Mr. *Hugh Binning's*, Entituled, *Fellowship with God*, on the 1. Epistle of *John*, Chap. 1. 2. Nor *The Sinners Sanctuary*, on *Rom.* Chap. 8. Nor *Principles of Christian Religion*, all by the said Author, for the space of 19. years to come, without licence of the Printers hereof.

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FELLOWSHIP

WITH 1059.9.26

G O D:

O R,

XXVIII. Sermons on the 1. Epistle
of *John*, Chap. 1, and 2.

Wherein the true ground and foundation
of attaining, the spiritual way of
intertaining fellowship with the Fa-
ther and the Son, and the blessed
condition of such as attain to
it, are most succinctly and
dilucidly explained.

By that eminent Preacher of the Gospel, Mr. *Hugh
Binning*, late Minister at Govan.

Joh. 17. 21. *That they all may be one, as thou Father,
art in me & I in thee, that they also may be one in us.*

Vers. 22. *And the glory which thou gavest me, I have
given them, that they may be one, even as we are one.*

EDINBURGH, Printed by *George Swintoun*
and *James Glen*, and are to be sold by them,
and by *David Trench* and *Thomas Brown*,
and at most Book-sellers Shops. 1671.

FELLOWSHIP

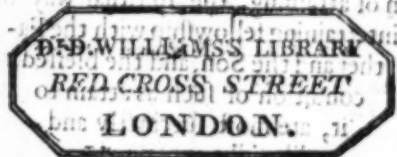
WITH

G O D:

O R

XVII. Sermons on the 1. Epistle
of James, Chap. 1. and 2.

Wherein the true ground and foundation
of the Christian religion is laid down, and the
outward way of life is shewn.



By the Rev. Mr. Williams, Minister of the Gospel, at Red Cross Street, London.

Printed by J. Smith, at the Angel, in St. Dunstons Church-yard, London.

EDWARD G. W. Williams, Minister of the Gospel, at Red Cross Street, London.
and J. Smith, Printer, at the Angel, in St. Dunstons Church-yard, London.
and J. Smith, Book-binder, at the Angel, in St. Dunstons Church-yard, London.

To the Reader.

of the Ministry, Mr. Hew Binning, with a special eye to the advancement of sincere seekers after fellowship with God, and seriously Heaven-ward tending Christians, amongst his hearers, So to whom shall we direct this posthumous, and alas, unperfected work, but to thee (O serious Christian.) Who makes it thy work not only, to seek after the knowledge of God in Christ, in a meer speculative way that thou may know, and therein rest, as if thy work were done, but also to follow after the enjoyment of that known God, and believed in Saviour, and all the promised priviledges of grace in this life, and of eternal glory in the life to come; To thee especially belong these precious soul-ravishing truths delivered in these Sermons. Two things, we know, thou hast determined thy soul unto, and fixed thine eye on, as thy aim and mark in thy generation, viz. the light of knowledge, and the life of practice; as to knowledge, we are confident that with the Apostle Paul, 1 Cor. 2. 2. Thou hast determined to know nothing but Christ, and him crucified, and as to practice, with the said Apostle thou prayest, that thou may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory of God, Phil. 1. 10, 11. And that thou may be blamelesse and harmlesse, the Son of God, without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, shining as a light in the world, Phil. 2. 15. Now in reading these Sermons thou shalt perceive, that to help thee in both these, hath been the very scope and design of this serious Preacher; desirest thou to know Jesus Christ the Lord of life, either according to his eternal subsistence in the infinite understanding of the Father, as God, or as to his appearance in the flesh, as Man, or fitness as Mediator, to reconcile thee to God his Father both in respect of willingness and ability to save, then here thou shalt behold him delineat

To the Reader.

to the life: Would thou be clearly informed what the duty
true and sure foundation of fellowship with God, the way of
maintaining it, the honour or happiness of it, and sweet
fruits of it, that fulnesse of joy that accompanies it, here shalt
thou find so cleare a light as shall rejoyce thy soul: Would thou
be fortified against the incursions and recursions of sin and
Satan, then come to this Magazine, and be furnished abundantly:
desirest thou to have thy soul increased in the love
of God, and to see manifest demonstrations of his love in
Christ to thee, oh then turn in hither, and get satisfaction to
thy souls desires: If thou desirest, with David, to hate sin
with a perfect hatred, here, if any where, thou shalt obtain
thy desire: Let not any think that we limit the benefit and
usefulness of these Sermons to serious Christians only, and so
by consequence exclude all others from any hope of soul-
salvage in reading them: Nay, we declare that though it
be undeniable that John did write this Epistle to a particular
person in the spiritual advantage of serious Christians,
and that our holy Predecessors who had this same designe, yet
we can be said to write all of what degree service, to the
serious perusing of them, assuring them that in so doing, they
shall not find their labour in vain in the Lord: For these
are such pregnant demonstrations of a Deity, infinite, eternal,
omnipotent, incomprehensible, governing all things by the word
of his power, as may dash the bulwasse of the most ungodly
frenchie notions, or propahey practical Atheism, and with con-
viction of spirit make him cry out, as Psal. 73. 22. So foolish
was I when I ignorantly was as a beast before thee: Here
are such cleare demonstrations of the abominableness of sin, of its direct
opposition to a holy God, and his most holy will, of its wofull
soul-damning effects, as may convince the most prophane and
stout-hearted carnalists, and awake him out of his soul-de-
ceiving slumber of security and presumption: Here are so glori-

To the Reader.

as evidences of Gods free and inconceivable love to the world, in Christ Jesus the Son of his love, as are able to enlighten with the light of consolation the saddest dejected and cast down soul under the apprehension of the curse and wrath of God due to it for sin, and raise it up to the hope of mercy in and through so clearly a revealed Saviour: In a word, here are to be found convictions for Atheists, piercing rebukes to the prophane, clear instructions to the ignorant, milk to babes in Christ, strong meat for the strong, strength to the weak, quickning and reviving for such as faint in the way, reflexatives for such as are in a decay, reclamations and loud cries after backsliders to recall them, breaths of consolation for Zions mourners, whether under the first commissions of the Law, and pangs of the new birth, or under the challenges and compunctions of heart for recidivations and relapses after conversion, even while they are groaning under the power and burden of the body of death, Rom. 7. And to add no more, here are most excellent counsels and directions to serious seekers of fellowship with God to guide them in their way, and help them forward to the attainment of that fulness of joy which is to be had in fellowship with the Father and the Son. That the Lord may blesse all such to whose hands these Sermons shall come, with blessings suitable to their souls condition, especially (the serious Christian,) for whose soul-furtherance and advancement these Sermons were first *Form'd*, and now *Printed*, is the most affectionate desire of

Thy Servant in the Gospel of
our dearest Lord and Saviour,

A. S.

S E R-



S E R M O N I.

I Joh. I. I. *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, &c.*

IT is the great qualification of a Disciple, or Hearer, to be attentive, and docile, to be capable of teaching, and to apply the mind seriously to it: it is much to get the ear of a man; if his ear be gotten, his mind is the more easily gained: Therefore those who professed eloquence, and studied to persuade men to any thing, used in the entry, to fall upon some thing that might stir up the attention of their hearers, or make them the more inclinable to receive instruction; or catch their favour or good-will, which is of great moment to persuasion: for it is sometimes fit to open the passages of the heart by such means, that there may be the more easie entry for instruction and persuasion. Truly there is something of this Art runs here in a divine channel; as indeed all these rules of humane wisdom attain their perfection, when they meet with a divine spirit, that elevates them to a more transcendent use. Happy was that eloquence of *Pauls*, and something like the

sweet inspiration of Angels, by which they prevail with the spirits of men: *Nevertheless, being crafty* (saith he) *I caught you with guile*, 2 Cor. 12. 16. There were, *pie fraudes*, whereby he used to catch poor souls out of the pit, and pluck them out of the fire; and he that said, *I will make you fishers of men*, taught them to use some holy deceit, to present some things for the allurements of souls, and so to surround and inclose them with most weighty and convincing reasons. This beloved Apostle who leaned upon Christs bosome, and was likely to learn the very secrets of the art of fishing souls, you see how he goeth about the business; he useth an holy art in this Preface; being about to give a re-capitulation of the whole Gospel, and to make a short summary of the Doctrine of it, for the more effectual establishment, and confirmation of souls already converted, and for the more powerful perswasion of others to imbrace it; he useth all the skill that can be in the entry, to dispose mens hearts to receive it; like a wise Orator, he labours to make them *attentos, dociles, & benevolos*: to stir up their attention, to conciliate their affection, and so to make them docile, and easily teachable: He stirs up attention, when he shews that he is not to speak about trifling light matters, or low things, or things that do not concern them; but concerning the greatest, most concerning, and important things to them, even the word
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Verf. I. the 1. Epistle of John. 3

of life, in which all their life was wrapt up: which though it was ancient in it self, yet with- all it was a new thing to the world, and so for all respects deserved to be taken serious notice of. Then he conciliates their benevolence and good-will, by shewing his own good affection towards them, and his great design in it, that it was only for their good and salvation, that he had nothing else before him, but to have them partakers with himself, in that same hap- pinesse: he had found a jewel, and he hides it not, but proclaims it, that all men may have fel- lowship with him, and that is, with God, and that cannot but bring in full joy to the heart. Now a soul being made thus attentive, and willing to hear, it is the best disposition, that makes them most capable of being taught. If those two stayes were come over; the careless regard that is in mens hearts towards the Go- spel, and the suspicious thoughts and prejudi- ces against the Ambassadors of it, then what would hinder to believe it? The great miseries of men are, *Inconsideration*, and *Misapprehensi- on*: Either men are so noised with other things, continually buzzing in their ears, and their hearts so posselt with the clamours of their lusts, and the cryes of the things of this world, that they have no leasure so much as to hearken pa- tiently to this blessed sound, or to apprehend seriously what weight and moment lyes in it; and so the most part of men cannot give that

earnest and deep attention that is necessarily required for this divine teaching ; or else there are many mistakes and misconceptions of the Gospel, which sometimes arise to that height of reasoning against God, and prejudices against them that carry this message ; which usually are joyued together, and these stop the ears of men against the wisest and most powerful enchantment of Preaching, that it gains not much ground on them. O that ye would once listen to the Gospel, *Hearken and incline your ears unto me*, is the Lords first great request : and if once you do but seriously apply your minds and hearts, to see what is held out unto you, and to prove what good is in it, certainly these sure and everlasting mercies will mercifully and sweetly catch you with guile, and deceive you, (if I may say so) to your eternal advantage. *Wisdom*, the *Fathers wisdom*, begs but an equal hearing of you, let her have but a patient hearing, and a silent impartial judgement of the heart, and she will carry it off all that suit you : It is lamentable that the voice of God should be out-cryed by mens continual uninterrupted flood of businesse, that fills the heart with a continual noise, and keeps men in such a constant hurry and distemper, that they can give time and patience to nothing else ; and this is only the advantage, the world and the lusts of it have ; for if they come once under a sober and serious examination, and the
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Verf. 1. *the 1. Epistle of John.* 5

other party, that is, *Jesus Christ*, and *the Word of Life*, might have the liberty to be heard in the inward retired thoughts of the heart, it would soon be found how unequal they are, and that all their efficacy consists, in our ignorance, and their strength, in our weaknesse; Certainly Christ would carry it, to the conviction of all that is in the soul. I beseech you let us give him this attention.

He that *answers a tale before he hear it*, its a folly and weaknesse to him: A folly certainly it is to give this Gospel a repulse before ye hear it: It promiseth life and immortality, which nothing else doth; and you intertain other things upon lower promises and expectations, even after frequent experiences of their deceitfulness: What a madnesse then is it to hear this promise of life in Christ, so often beaten upon you, and yet never so much as to put him to the proof of it? and to put him off continually who knocks at your hearts, before you will consider attentively who it is that thus importunes you. O my beloved, that you would hear him to *Amen*, let him speak freely to your hearts, and commune with them in the night on your beds, in your greatest retirement from other things, that you may not be disturbed by the noise of your lusts and business; and I perswade my self, you who have now least mind of this life, and joy in God, should find it, and find it in him: But to cut off all convictions

and perswasions at first, and to set such a guard at your minds, to provide that nothing of that kind come in, or else that it be cast out as an enemy, this is unequal, ignorant, and unreasonable dealing, which you alone will repent of, it may be too late, when past remedy.

He propounds that which he is to speak, in the fittest way for the commendation of it to their hearts: and Oh! How vast a difference betwixt this, and the ordinary subject of mens discourses? our ears are filled continually with reports: and it is the usual way of men to delight to hear, and to report, even those things that are not so delightful in themselves; and truly there are not many occurrences in the world (suppose you had a Diurnal of the affairs of all men, every week) that can give any solid refreshment to the heart, except in the holy meditation of the vanity, vexation, and inconstancy that God hath subjected all those things unto. But its sad, that Christians, who have so noble and divine, so pleasant and profitable things, to speak upon one to another, are notwithstanding as much subject to that *Athenian* disease, to be itching after new things continually, and to spend our time this way, to report, and to hear news; and alas, what are those things that are tossed up and down continually, but the follies, weaknesses, impotencies and wickedness, ambition and avarice of men, the iniquity and impiety of the world that lyes
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Vers. I. *the I. Epistle of John.* 7

in wickednesse; and is there any thing in this, either pleasant or profitable, that we should delight to intertain our own thoughts, and others ears with them? But the Subject that is here intreated of, is of another nature, nothing in it self so excellent, nothing to us so convenient, *That which was from the beginning, of the word of life, we declare unto you.* O how pleasant and sweet a voice is that which sounds from Heaven, be those confused noises are that arise from the earth? This is a Message that is come from Heaven, with him that came down from it: and indeed that is the Airt, from whence good news hath come; Since the first curse was pronounced upon the earth, the earth hath brought forth nothing, but thorns and briars of contention, strife, sorrow, and vexation: Only from above hath this Message been sent to renew the world again, and recreate it, as it were: There are four properties by which this infinitely surpasses all other things can be told you. For it self it is most excellent; for its endurance, it is most ancient; and to us, it is most profitable; and both in its self, and to us, it is most certain; and by these the Apostle labours to prepare their hearts to serious attention.

For the excellency of the subject that he is to declare, its incomparable, for it is no lesse, then that Jewel that is hid in the Mine of the Scriptures, which he, as it were, digs up, and
shews

shews and offers it unto them; that Jewel (I say) which, when a man hath found, he may sell all to buy it; that Jewel, more precious then the most precious desires and delights of men, even *Jesus Christ, the substantial word of life*, who is the substance of all the shadows of the Old Testament, the end of that ministry, the accomplishment of the promises, and that very life of all Religion, without which there is nothing more vain and empty. It is true, the Gospel is the *word of life*, and holds out salvation to poor sinners, but yet it is Christ that is the life of that word, not only as touching the efficacy and power of it, but as touching the subject of it; for the Gospel is a word of life only, because it speaks of him, who is *the life and the light of men*; it is but a report of the true life, as *John* said, *I am not that light, but am sent to bear witness of that light*, Joh. 1. 8. So the Gospel, though it be called *the power of God to salvation*, Rom. 1. 16. and *the savour of life*, and *the Gospel of salvation*, Eph. 1. 13. yet it is not that *true life*, but only a testimony and declaration of it, it hath not life and immortality in it self, but only the *bringing of those to light*, and to the knowledge of men, 2 Tim. 1. 10. it is a discovery where these treasures are lying, for the searching and finding.

To speak of this *word of life, Jesus Christ*, according to his eternal subsistence in the infinite understanding of the Father; it would certainly

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Verf. 1. *the 1. Epistle of John.* 9

ly require a divine spirit, more elevated above the ordinary sphere of men, and separate from that earthlineſſe, and impurity, that makes us incapable of ſeeing that holy and pure Maſteſty. Angels were but low Meſſengers for this; for how can they expreſſe to us, what they cannot conceive themſelves, and therefore wonder at the myſtery of it? I confeſſe, the beſt way of ſpeaking thoſe things, which ſo infinitely ſurpaſſ created capacities, were to ſit down in ſilence, and wonder at them; and withall to taſte ſuch a ſweetneſſe, in the immense greatneſſe, and infinite myſteriouſneſſe of what we believe, as might raviſh the ſoul more, after that which is unknown, then all the perfections of the world known and ſeen to the bottom can do. This Doctrin of the holy Trinity hath been propagated from the beginning of the world, even among the Heathens, and derived by tradition from the firſt Fathers, or the Hebrews to neighbour Nations, and therefore they ſpeak many divine things of that *Infinite, Supream Being*, who is the fountain of the whole Creation, and that he created all things by his moſt divine *Word*, and that his bleſſed *Spirit* is the union and bond of both, and of all things beſides. It is known what myſteries the *Pythagoreans* apprehended in the number of *Three*, what perfection they imagined to be in it: So much was let out, as might either make them without excuſe, or prepare the world to receive readily

readily the light, which it should be clearly revealed: It is commonly held forth, that this *eternal Word*, is the birth of the infinit understanding of God, reflecting upon his own most absolute and perfect being; which is illustrated by some poor comparison to us Creatures, who form in our minds in the understanding of any thing, an inward word, or image of the object, some representation and similitude of that we understand, and this is more perfect than an external vocal expression can be; so we have a weak and finite conception of the acting of that *infinit wisdom of God*, by which he knows himself, that there results, as it were, upon it, the perfect *substantial image*, and the *expresse character of the Divine Essence*; and therefore is the Son of God called, *the Word which was with God*, and *the wisdom of the Father*, because he is, as it were, the very birth of his understanding, and not only the Image of his own Essence, but the *Idea*, in which he conceived, and by which he created the visible world. Then we use to conceive the *Holy Ghost*, as the production of his blessed will, whereby he loves, delights, and hath complacency in his own all-sufficient, all-blessed Being, which he himself alone perfectly comprehends, by his infinit understanding; and therefore called, *the Spirit*, a word borrowed from resemblance to poor creatures, who have many impulses, and inclinations to several things, and are carried to motion,

motion, and action, rather from that part which is invisible in them; the subtlest parts therefore called *Spirits*: So the Lord applyes his Almighty power, and exerceth his infinite wisdom, according to the pleasure and determination of his will, for that seems to be the immediat principle of working; therefore there is mention made of the *Spirit*, in the Creation of the world, *He sent out his Spirit, and they were created*, Plal. 104. 30. These are the weak and low attempts of men to reach the height of that unsearchable mystery; such conjectures we have of this *Word of God*, and his eternal generation, as if Trees could take upon them to understand the nature of Beasts, or as if Beasts would presume to give an account of the spirit that acts in men: Certainly the distance is infinitely greater between God and us; and he must needs behold greater vanity, folly, and darknesse, in our clearest apprehensions of his Majesty, then we could find in the reasonings and conceptions of Beasts about our nature. When our own conception in the womb, is such a mystery, as made *David* to say, *O how wonderfully am I made, and fearfully*? he saw a curious art and wisdom in it, that he could not understand, and he believed an infinit power, he could not conceive, which surprized his soul with such unexpected matter of wonder, as made him fear and tremble at the thought of it. I say, when the generation of a poor creature, hath so much depth

depth of wisdom in it, now canst thou think to understand that everlasting wonder of Angels, the birth and conception of *that eternal wisdom of God*? And if thou canst not understand from whence the wind comes, and whither it goes, or how thine own spirits beat in thy veins, what is the production of them, and what their motions? How can we then conceive the procession of the Holy Ghost, *which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to consider it*?

SERMON II.

I Joh. I. I. *That which was from the beginning, &c.*

THings are commended sometimes, because they are ancient, especially Doctrines in Religion, because truth is before error, and falsehood is but an aberration from truth; and therefore there is so much plea and contention among men, about Antiquity, as if it were the sufficient rule of verity; but the abuse is, that men go not far enough backward in the steps of Antiquity, that is, to the most ancient rule, and profession, and practice of truth in Scripture, to Christ and his Apostles, but halt in their Grand-fathers Tombs. But sometimes things

things are commended, because new; the nature of man being inclined to change and variety, and ready to surfeit and loath accustomed things: Even as the stomach finds appetite for new and unusual dyets, to the mind of man hath a secret longing after new doctrines, and things. Now we have both these combined together in this Subject, which makes it the more excellent and wonderful; Antiquity, and Novelty: for Antiquity, it is that *which was from the beginning, and which was with the Father,* and that is before all Antiquity, even from eternity; not only from the beginning of time, but before all time, before all imaginable beginnings. He, of whom he speaks, *Christ Jesus, the Fathers Word, was with the Father, from the beginning, with the Ancient of Dayes,* who infinitely, and unmeasurably, antedates all antiquity, to whose endurance, all antiquity that is renowned among men, is but novelty, to whom, the world is but as of six dayes standing, or but as of yesterday, if we consider that infinit, beginningless, immensurable endurance of God, before this world: What a boddom or clew is that, that can never be untwined by the imaginations of men and Angels; To all eternity they should never unwind it, and come to the end of that threed, of the age of the Father, and the Son; who possessed one another before the hills were, and before the foundations of the mountains: This is it that maketh Religion
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the richest and most transcendent subject in the world, that it presents us with a twofold eternity, and invirones the soul before and behind with an eternity without beginning, only proper to God, and an eternity without end, communicated to Angels and men, from God. That which was from the beginning, and before all beginning, either real, or imagined, How much moment and weight is in that, to perswade a soul, and compose it, beyond all the specious and painted appearances of the world? to consider that such a Saviour is holden out unto us, to come unto, and lean upon, that is *the Rock of ages*, upon whose word, this huge frame is bottomed, and stands firm; one who infinitely exceeds and prevents all things, visible or invisible, all their mutations and changes, one who was possessed of the Father, as his delight, before the foundation of the world, and so most likely to reconcile him to us, and prevail with him; yea, most certainly, they must have one will, and one delight, who were undivided from all eternity; and they then *rejoycing in the habitable parts of the earth*, taking complacency in their own thoughts of peace and good-will they had toward us, afterwards to break forth. And if both delighted in their very projects and plots upon the business, what may we think the accomplishment of the whole design will add, if it were possible to superadd to their delight? I would have you upon this, to gather two considerati-

Verf. 1. *the 1. Epistle of John.* 15

ons, for your edification: One, to think what an incomparably excellent Saviour we have, one with God, equal to him, yea, one with him from all eternity, and so how strong a foundation there is for faith and confidence? What a Rock to establish a tossed soul upon? Mans misery and curse being for all eternity, their is one to deliver from that, who was from all eternity. And who could purchase unto us such absolute blessedness throughout all eternity, who was not himself from all eternity? What marvellous congruity and beauty is in the ways of God? How is all fitted and framed by infinit wisdom? to the end that we may have strong consolation. Do you not see the infinit evil, and hainousness of sin, in the giving of such a precious ranfome for it? O how is the black visage of sin pourtrayed in the beauty and glory of the Mediators Person? How is it painted, even to horreur in his death? Again, what divinity and worth is put upon the immortal soul of man, that is but of yesterday, since the beginning? When he that was the delight of God, before all beginning, is weighted in the ballance, as it were, with it, and no other thing found sufficient for exchange and compensation, that the soul may be redeemed: And doth not this answer all the jealousies, and suspicious thoughts, and fearful apprehensions, arising from the consideration of our own weaknesse and infirmity? When such an one is offered, as is able to save

to the utmost. Then I would desire you may believe, that the Father is as well minded to the salvation of sinners, as the Son; for they were sweet company together from all eternity, and, as it were, contrived this plot and design between them, to save and redeem mankind. Some intertain haister thoughts of the Father, as if Christ were more accellible, and exorable; but the truth is, he hath given his Son this command, and therefore he professed, that it was not so much his will, as his Fathers, he was about: Therefore correct your apprehensions, do not stand aback from the Father, as it were, till you have prevailed with Christ, no, that is not the way; come in your first addresse to the Father, in the Son, for so he wills you; not because he must be overcome by his Sons perswasion, but because he would have his love to run in that channel, through Christ to us: And indeed our Saviour was much in holding out the love of the Father, and laboured to perswade the world of it. Withall, I wish you to consider whom ye neglect and despise; who hear this Gospel daily, and the word of life holden out unto you; and yet suffer not your hearts to be moved, or stirred after him. Alas; my beloved, to forsake so great a mercy, as the *eternal Word of Life*, as the *infinit Wisdome of the Father*, and to let the offer of this, every day run by us, and never to find leasure and vacancy from the multitude of businesses, and
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throng of the thoughts, and luits of the world, never to start so far backward, as to look beyond this world, to God, and his *Son Jesus Christ*, never to mind seriously, either him that was before all things visible, or our own souls, that must survive, and out-live all this visible frame. This, I say, is the great misery and condemnation of the world, that this *eternal light* hath shined, and you love your own darkness better: But be perswaded, that one day ye will think one offer of this *Word of Life*, better then life, better, infinitely better then the most absolute life that the attendance and concurrence of all the creatures could yeeld you. O then that ye would incline your ears and hearts to this that is declared unto you, to receive this *Word of Life*, that *was from the beginning*, and ye may be perswaded, ye shall enjoy a blessednesse without end.

But there is withall a newness in this subject, which both increases admiration, and may the more engage our affection; for *the life was manifested* (saith he) *vers. 2.* and he is such a *word of life*, as though he was invisible, and untouchable from the beginning, yet he was lately cloathed with flesh, that made him both visible, and capable of being handled. Now truly these are the two Poles, about which the mystery, glory, and wonder of Christianity turns: the antiquity of his real existence, as God; and the latenesse or novelty of his appearance

pearance in the flesh, as man ; Nothing so old, for he hath the infinit fore-start of the oldest and most ancient Creatures. Take those Angels, the Sons of God, who sung together in the first morning of the Creation, yet their generation can soon be told, and their years numbered ; it is easie to calculat all antiquity, and we should not reach six thousand years, when it is taken at the largest measure ; and what are six thousand years in his sight, but as six dayes, when they are past ? and if we would run backward, as far before that point of beginning, and calculat other six thousand, yet we are never a jot nearer the age of the *Son of God*. Suppose a mountain of sand, as big as the earth, and an Angel to take from it one grain every year, your imagination would weary it self, ere ye reckoned in what space this mountain should be diminished, or removed : It would certainly trouble the Arithmetick of the wisest Mathematician. Now imagine as many years, or ages of years, to have run out before the world took its beginning, as the years in which the Angel would exhaust this mountain ; yet we have not come a white nearer the endurance of our Lord and Saviour, whose being is like a Circle, without beginning, or end. *Behold he is great, and we know him not, and the number of his years cannot be searched out, Job 36. 26. and who can declare his generation ? The age of this World is such a labyrinth, with innumerable turnings*

nings, and windings in it, which will alwayes lead them round that enter in it; and so they are, after the longest progress and search, but juſt where they were, alwayes beginning, and never coming nearer the beginning of his duration, becauſe it is the beginning of all things that have a beginning, but hath none it ſelf. Now he that was thus bleſſed from everlaſting, *who dwelt in inaccessible light and glory, which no man hath ſeen, nor can ſee,* infinitely removed from all humane capacities and ſenſes; he, I ſay, begins to be manifeſted in the fulneſſe of time; and to make himſelf viſible, he takes on our fleſh; and all for this purpoſe, that he who was the ſubſtantial life in himſelf, and the eternal life, in an eſſential and neceſſary way, might become life to poor dead ſinners, and communicate to them eternal life; and truly it was no wonder that all ages were in expectation of this, from the beginning of the world, ſince it was firſt promiſed, that the Inhabitants of Heaven were in a longing expectation to ſee, and look into this myſtery, for there is ſomething in it more wonderful then the creation of this huge frame of Heaven and Earth: God made himſelf in a manner viſible, by making the viſible world: His power, goodneſſe, and wiſdome, are every where imprinted in great Characters on the whole, and all the parts of it: *the light,* How glorious a garment is it? with which he is, as it were, cloathed: *the Heavens,* How Majeflick a Throne &

the *Earth*, How stately a Foot-stool? the *Thunder*, How glorious and terrible a voice? In a word, the being, the beauty, the harmony, and proportion of this huge frame, is but a visible appearance of the invisible God. But in taking on our flesh, *the Word* is more wonderfully manifested, and made visible; for, in the first, the Creator made creatures to start out of nothing, at his command; but in this, the Creator is made a Creature: He once gave a beginning of being to things that were not; being before all beginning himself; he now takes a beginning, and becomes flesh, that he was not. And what is it in which he was manifested? Is it the spiritual nature of Angels? But though that far excell ours, yet it is no manifestation of him to us; for he should still be as unknown as ever. Is it in the glory, perfection, and flower of the visible world, as in the Sun, and lights of Heaven? But though that have more shew of glory, then the flesh of man; yet it makes not much to our comfort; there would not be so much consolation in that manifestation. Therefore, O how wisely and wonderfully is it contrived, for the good of lost man? *That the Son of God shall be made of a woman*, that the Father of spirits shall be manifested in the lowest habit of our flesh: and the lower and baser that be, in which he appears, the higher the mystery is, and the richer the comfort is; suppose the manifestation of glory should not be so great, yet the manifestation

festation of love is so much the greater ; and this is the great design ; *God so loved, &c. Job. 3.* Nay, I may say, even the glory of the *only begotten Son of God*, was the more visibly manifested, that he appeared in so low and unequal a shape ; for power, to shew it self in weaknesse, for glory, to appear in basenesse, for divinity, to kyth in humanity, and such glorious rayes, to break forth from under such a dark cloud ; this was greater Glory, and more Majesty, then if he had only shewed himself in the perfection of the creatures. Now it is easie to distinguish the vail, from that it covers ; to separat infirmity from divinity : but then it had been more difficult, if his outward appearance had been so glorious, to give unto God what was Gods, and to give the creatures what was the creatures : The more near his outward shape had been to his divine nature, the lesse able had we been to see the glory of his Divinity through it.

Now, my beloved, when both these are laid together, the ancientnesse of our Saviour, and withal the newness of his appearance in the flesh, by which he hath come so near us, and, as it were, brought his own Majesty within our sphear, to be apprehended by us ; and for no other end, but to make life and immortality to shine forth, as beams from him, to the quickning of dead souls. O how should this conjunction endear him to us ; that the *everlasting Father* should be-

come a Child for us ; that is one wonder. The next wonder is, that *we who are enemies, should be made the children of God by him* : when the dark and obscure prophesying of this, when the twilight of Jewish types and shadows did create so much joy in the hearts of believers, in so much that they longed for, and rejoyced to see afar off that day ; when such a dark representation of this *Word of Life*, was the very life of the godly in the world, for four thousand years ; O how much is the cause of joy increased, by the rising of the *Sun of Righteousnesse* himself, and appearing in the very darkest night of Superstition and Idolatry that was ever over the world ? When the *true Life* hath arisen himself, and brought to open light that life that was obscurely couched up in Prophecies and Ceremonies, as hid under so many Clouds. O then, let us open our hearts to him, and intertain these new and fresh tidings, with new delights : Though these be now more then 1600. years old, yet they are still recent to a believing heart ; there is an everlasting spring in them, that sends out every day fresh consolation to souls, as refreshing, as the first day this spring was opened. This is the new Wine that never grows old, nay, it is rather every generation renewed, with the accession of some new manifestation of the love of God. Christs Incarnation was the first manifestation of the Sun, the very morning of light and life, the day-spring, visit-

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visiting the world, that was buried in an helth
darknesse of Heathen Idolatry: and even the
Church of God, in the grave of Superstition, and
corruption of Doctrine and manners: then did
that *Sun of Righteousnesse* first set up his head
above the Horizon; but it is but one day still,
he hath been but coming by degrees to the Me-
ridian, and *shining more and more to the perfect day*;
That Sun hath not set since, but made a course,
and gone a round about the World, in the Preach-
ing of the Gospel, and brought life, & light about,
by succession, from one nation to another; and one
generation to another; and therefore we ought to
intertain it this day with acclamations, and jubila-
tion of heart, as the people that ly under the
North, do welcome the Sun when it comes once a
year to them. *After that the kindness and love of
God our Saviour toward man appeared, Tit. 3. 4.*
Philargenis, his kindly and affectionat love to man-
kind, that is it that shines so brightly; the beams
of grace and love to men, are the rayes that are
scattered from this *Sun of Righteousness*. O the
hardness of mens hearts, the impenetrable obstina-
cy of man, that this cannot melt or pierce. How
damnable and miserable a case are they into, who
can neither be perswaded with the eternity of
this subject, to adore it, nor moved with the
late appearance of the love of God to the world,
in sending of his Son? whom neither Christs Ma-
jesty, nor his Humility, can draw. Certainly this
makes

makes sinners under the Gospel, in a more deplorable condition then Sodom; because if he had not come, they had not had such sin, but now it is without excuse, &c.

SERMON III.

I Joh. I. 1, 2, 3. *That which we have heard and seen of the word of life, declare we unto you, &c.*

THings that are excellent in themselves, will be loved for themselves; but they become the more suitable object of affection, if they have withal some suitableness and conveniency to us: Yet neither the excellency, nor conveniency of the object, is sufficient to engage the heart, if there be not something in the mind too, suitable to the object: that is, the apprehension of that reality and good that is in it; for as there is a certainty in the object, that makes it a real, not imaginary thing; so there must be a certainty in the subject, whereby the thing is apprehended to be true, good, and excellent; and then the object of affection is compleated. Some things there are in nature, excellent in themselves, but they rather beget admiration, then affection, because they are not suitable to our necessities: Other things of a more ordinary purchase,

purchase, have some conveniency to supply our wants; and though they be lesse worth in their own nature then precious stones, and such like, yet they are more desired. But there is this lamentable disproportion betwixt our apprehensions, and the things themselves, which is the ground of much disappointment; and so of vexation. The things of this world having nothing of that solid excellency, or true worth, and conveniency to our souls, nothing suitable to our immortal spirits; but being empty vain shadows, and windy husks, in stead of substantial true food; yet there are high apprehensions, and big conceits of them, which is a kind of monstrous production, or empty swelling of the mind; which because it hath no bottom of solidity, it will fall and evanish. Again, take a view of spiritual things, holden out in the Gospel, and there is as incongruous and unproportioned carriage of our hearts towards them, they have a certainty, and reality, and subsistence in themselves, they alone are excellent, and suitable to our spirits; notwithstanding, the mind of man is hugely mishapen towards them by unbelief, and hath nothing in his apprehension suitable to the things themselves: they are represented as far below their true worth, as things temporal above their just value; and therefore men are not enamoured with them, souls are not ravished after that beauty that is in them.

Now the end of these words read, is to reform
this

this irregular, disorderly posture of your minds, to hold out to you things truly excellent, and exceedingly convenient, things good and profitable, in the most superlative degree, in the highest rank that your imagination can suppose; and then to perswade you, that you are not deceived with vain words, or fair promises, but that there is a certain truth, and an infallible reality in them, that you being ascertained in your souls, according to the certainty of the things presented, you may then freely, without any reserve, give your hearts to love, embrace, and follow them. O that there might be such a meeting between your hearts and this *eternal life*, that as he hath come near to us, to be suitable to us, your apprehensions might draw near to be suitable to him: and by this means, your souls might meet immediatly with *that Word of Life*, and have that constant fellowship with him, that is spoken of, *vers. 3.* so your joy should be full. For joy is but the full peace of the desires; fill up all the wants of the heart, and then it is full of joy. And so, when such a satisfying object is pitched on, as doth exactly correspond, and answer the inward apprehensions of the mind; then there is no more room in the heart for any other thing: as if two Superfices were exactly plain and smooth, they could joyn so closely together, that no air could come between them, and then they could hardly be pull'd asunder.

We spoke something of the excellency of that

Word

Verſ. 1. *the 1. Epistle of John.* 29

Word of Life in himself, and it is but little that is said, when all is said, in respect of that which *He* truly is; but I fear we speak, and ye hear more of these things, then either of us lively and affectionately apprehends, or lays up in our hearts. I fear, that as we say lesse then is, so more then we think; I mean, seriously think upon. But we shall proceed, such an everlasting glorious Person, though he have life in himself, though he be never so excellent, as *the Son of God*, yet what is that to us? It seems he is never a whit nearer us, or not more suitable to restore us, then the very Majesty that we offended. How far is he without our sight, and without our comprehension? He is high as Heaven, Who shall ascend to bring down that *eternal life* to us? But stay and consider, that he is not only so glorious in himself, but so gracious to us; he is not only invisible, as God, but manifested to our senses, as Man: not only hath life in himself, but is an everlasting spring of life to us; not only hath his Throne in Heaven with his Father, but hath come down to the world, to bring that *eternal life* near us, even in our mouth and hearts; to preach it, to purchase it, to seal it, and to bestow it, and *the life was manifested*: *The life*, and that *eternal life*, words of force, that have some Emphasis in them: *the life* is much, that *eternal life* is more; and yet these had been little to us, if not manifested to us: Life might have remained hid in God, eternal life might
have

have recided in Christ the Fountain for all eternity, and nothing diminished of their happiness, if these had never sprung out and vented themselves; if that life that was with the Father from the beginning, had never come down from the Father, we would have missed it, not they; we alone had been miserable by it: Well then, there is a manifestation of life in Christs low descent to death; there is a manifestation of the riches of love and grace in the poverty and emptinesse of our Saviour, and thus he is suited to us and our necessities every way fitly correspondent: and now it is not only, *as the Father hath life in himself, so the Son hath life in himself*, but there is a derivation of that life to man; that donation of life to the Son, *Job: 5. 26.* was not so much for any need he had of it, as by him to bestow it on us, that it might be, *as the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: So he that eats me, even he shall live by me, Joh. 6. 57.* As Parents that retain affection to their Children, albeit they have committed great injuries, for which they are driven out of their house, yet they will, as it were understand bestow upon them, and exercise that same love in a covered way, by a third person, by giving to them, to impart to their Children. Notwithstanding this halts too much, for our Father dissembles not his love, but proclaims it in sending his Son; Nor doth Christ hide it, but declares, that he is instructed with sufficient

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Verf. 1, 2, 3. *the 1. Epistle of John.* 29

furniture for eternal life, that himself is the *bread of life sent from Heaven*, that whosoever receiveth it with delight, and ponders, and meditates on it in the heart, and so digests it in their souls, they shall find a quickning, quieting, comforting, and strengthening vertue in him. Nay, there is a strait connexion between his life and ours, *because I live, ye shall live also*; as if he could no more want us, then his Father can want him, *Job. 14. 19.* And as if he could no more be happy without us, then his Father without him. And whence is it come to passe, but from his manifestation for this very end and purpose? How should such strange Logick hold? Whence such a because? If this had not been all his errand into the world, for which his Father dispensed to want him, as it were, and he did likewise condescend to leave his Father for a season. And now this being the businesse he came about, it is strange he appeared in so unsuitable and unlikely a form, in weaknesse, poverty, misery, ignominy, and all the infirmities of our flesh; which seemed rather contrary to his design, and to indispose him for giving life to others, whose life was a continued death in the eyes of men; and the last act of the scene seems to blow up the whole design of quickning dead sinners; when he who was designed Captain of Salvation, is killed himself: For if he save not himself, how should he save others? And yet behold the infinit wisdom, power, and grace

God, working under-ground, giving life to the dead, by the death of life it self: saving those that are lost, by one that lost himself: overcoming the world by weaknesse: conquering Satan by suffering: triumphing over death by dying: Like that renowned King of the *Lacedemonians*, who (when he heard of an Oracle, that if the General were saved alive, the Army could not be victorious) changed his habit, and went amongst the Camp of his enemies, and fought valiantly till he was killed; whom when the Armies of the enemies understood to be the King and General, they presently lost their hearts, and retired and fled: So our Saviour, and Captain of our Salvation, hath offered himself once for all, and by being killed, hath purchased *life* to all that believe in his death, and that *eternal life*: Therefore, he is not only the *word of life* in himself, and that eternal life in an essential manner, but he alone *hath the words of eternal life*, and is the alone fountain of life to us.

Now for the certainty of this manifestation of *the word of life* in our flesh, both that he was man, and that he was more then a man, even God: this, I say, we have the greatest evidence of, that the world can afford, next to our own seeing and handling. To begin with the testimony set down here, of these who were ear and eye-witnesses of all; which if they be men of credit, cannot but make a great impression of faith upon others. Consider who the Apostles were, men of great
simplicity,

Vers. 1, 2, 3. *the 1. Epistle of John.* 31

simplicity, whose education was so mean, and expectations in the world so low, that they could not be supposed to conspire together to a falsehood; and especially when there was no worldly inducement leading them thereto, but rather all things perswading to the contrary: their very adversaries could never object any thing against them, but want of learning, and simplicity, which are furthest from the suspicion of deceitfulness. Now how were it possible, think you, that so many thousands every where, should have received this new Doctrine, so unsuitable to humane reason, from their mouths, if they had not perswaded them that themselves were eye-witnesses of all these miracles that he did, to confirm his Doctrine, and this testimony had not been above all imaginable exception? Yea, so evident was it in matter of fact, that both enemies themselves confessed, the Jews and Gentiles that persecuted that way, were constrained through the evidence of the truth, to acknowledge, that such mighty works shewed forth themselves in him, though they out of malice imputed it to ridiculous and blasphemous causes: And besides, the Apostle used to provoke to the very testimony of 500. *who had seen Jesus rise from death*, which is not the custom of liars, neither is it possible for so many, as it were, of purpose, to conspire to such an untruth, as had so many miseries and calamities following on the profession of it, 1 Cor. 15. 6.

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But what say they? *That which we have heard of*, not only from the Prophets, who have witnessed of him from the beginning, and do all conspire together to give a testimony that he is the Saviour of the world: but from *John*, who was his Messenger, immediately sent before his face, and whom all men, even Christs enemies, acknowledged to be a Prophet; and therefore, his visible pointing out the Lamb of God, his declaring how near he was, and preferring of him infinitely before himself, who had so much authority himself, (and so is likely to have spoken the truth; being misled with no ambition, or affectation of honour,) his instituting a new ordinance, plainly pointing out the Messiah at the doors, and publishing constantly that voice, *The kingdom of Heaven is at hand*; these we, and all the people have heard, and heard not with indignation, but with reverence and respect. But above all, we heard himself the true Prophet, and sweet Preacher of Israel, since the first day he began to open his mouth in the Ministry of the Gospel, we have with attentive ears, and earnest hearts, received all from his mouth, and laid up these golden sayings in our hearts: He did not constrain them to abide with him, but there was a secret power that went from him, that chained them to him inevitably, *Lord, whither shall we go from thee, for thou hast the words of eternal life*? O! that was an attractive virtue, a powerful conserving virtue, that went out of

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hear him too, for the sum of the living words that came from the *Word of Life* are written; his Sermons are abridged in the Evangelists, that you may read them, and when you read them, think within your self, that you hear his holy mouth speak them; Set your selves as amongst his Disciples, *that so you may believe, and believing may have eternal life*; for, for this end are they written, *Joh. 20. 30, 31.*

S E R M O N I V.

I Joh. I. 2. — *Which we have seen, &c.*

THere is a gradation of certainty here, hearing himself speak, is more then hearing by report; but an eye-witness is better then ten ear-witnesses, and handling adds a third assurance; for the sense of touching gives the last and greatest evidence of truth. It is true, that the sense is properly correspondent to sensible things, and of it self, can only give testimony to his Humanity; yet I conceive these are here alleged for both, even also to witness his glorious and Divine Nature; which though it did not fall under sight and handling, yet it discovered it self to be latent, under that visible covering of flesh, by sensible effects, no lesse, then the spirit of man, which is invisible, manifests its

its pretence in the body, by such operations sensible, as can proceed from no other principle : And therefore, this faithful witness adds, *which we have looked upon* ; which relates not only to the outward attention of the eyes, but points at the inward intention, and affection of the heart : our senses did bring in such strange and marvellous objects to our minds, that we stood gazing, and beheld it over and over again, looked upon it with reason, concluding what it might be ; we gave intertainment to our minds, to consider it wisely and deliberately, and fastned our eyes, that we might detain our hearts, in the consideration of such a glorious person. From this then ye have two things clear ; one is, that our Lord Jesus Christ was a true man, and that his Disciples had all possible evidence of it, which the History more abundantly shews ; he conversed with them familiarly, he eat and drank with them, yea, his conversation in the world, was very much condescending in outward behaviour, to the customes of the world, he eat with Pharisees when they invited him ; he refused not ; but he was more bold with Publicans and sinners, to converse with them ; as being their greatest friend : He was uncivil to none ; would deterr none through a rigid austere conversation ; and indeed, to testifie the truth of his Humane Nature, he came so low to partake of all humane infirmities without sin, and to be subject to extraordinary afflictions and crosses, as to

the eyes of the world it did quite extinguish his Divine Glory, and bury it in misbelief. This which we speak of, as a testimony and evidence that he was man, was the very grand stumbling-block and offence of the Jews and Gentiles; which they made use of as an evidence and certain testimony that he was not God: the evidence of the one seems to give in evidence to the other. But let us consider this, for it is a sweet and pleasant Subject, if our hearts were suitably framed to delight in it, that there was as much evidence to the conviction of all mens senses, of his Divine Majesty, as of his Humane Infirmitie: and that there are two concurring evidences, which enlightens one another; which we shall shew, partly from his own works and miracles, and partly from the more then miraculous successe and progresse of the Gospel after him.

For the first, *John* testifies, that not only they saw the baseness of his outward shape, but *the glory of the only begotten Son of God, full of grace and truth*, *Joh. 1. 14.* *John* the Baptist sent some of his Disciples, because of their own unbelief, to enquire *Jesus, Art thou he, or look we for another?* And what answer gave he them? What reason to convince them? *Go (saith he) and tell what ye have seen and heard, that the blind see, the lame walk, and the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor receive the Gospel:* And blessed is he who ever shall not for *any outward unseemlineffe, and baseness,*

ness offend; But go by that, in to the glory that shines out in such works. It is said in *Luke 7. 21.* that *the same hour he cured many*: Before he spoke in answer, he answered them by his deeds; he gave a visible demonstration of that they doubted of: For they could not but see a power above created power in these works, which surpass Nature and Art: so many wonderful works done, so often repeated, before so many thousands, even many of his watchful and observant enemies; and all done so easily by a word, infinite cures for number and quality wrought, which passed the skill of all Physicians; Devils dispossessed, life restored, water converted into excellent wine, without the maturation of the Sun, or help of the Vine tree; a little bread so strangely enlarged to the satisfaction of many thousands, and more remaining then was laid down; the winds and seas obeying his very word, and composing themselves to silence at his rebuke; and infinite more of this kind; Are they not in the common apprehension of men, of a degree superiour to that of nature? Who could restore life, but he that gave it? Whom would the Devils obey, but him at whom they tremble? Who could transubstantiate water into wine, but he that created both these substances, and every year by a long circuit of the operations of nature, turns it into wine? Who could feed seven thousand with that which a few persons would exhaust, but he that can creat it of nothing, and

by whose word all this visible world started out of nothing? Nay, let us suppose these things to be done only by divine assistance, by some peculiar divine influence, then certainly, if we consider the very end of this miraculous assistance of a creature, that it was to confirm the Doctrine delivered by him, and make such a deep impression of the truth of it in the hearts of all, that it cannot be rooted out; this being the very genuine end of the wisdom of God in such works, it must needs follow, that all that which Christ revealed, both of himself and the Father, of his own being with him from the beginning, of his being one with him, and being his eternal Son; all this must needs be infallibly true; for it is not supposable to agree with the wisdom and goodness of God, to manifest so much of his infinite power and glory, in so extraordinary a manner, to bear testimony to an impostor or deceiver. Therefore though no more could be at first extorted from an enemy of Christ's Doctrine, but that such mighty works did shew forth themselves, which could not be done, but by the Divine assistance and extraordinary help of God; yet, even from that confession it may be strongly concluded, that seeing there was no other end imaginable of such extraordinary assistance, but the confirmation of his new Doctrine, and that of his Divine Nature, being one of the chief points of it, it must needs inforce, that he was not only helped by God, as *Moses*, but that he

was God, and did these things by his own power. By this then it appears that though after so many Prophecies of him, and expectations from the beginning, we see but a man in outward appearance despicable, and *without comlineffe and form*; yet if we could open the eyes of our souls, and fix them upon him, we behold as through some small crannies, Majesty shining in his misery, power discovering it self in his weaknesse, even that power that made the world, and man too: He was born indeed, yet of a Virgin, he was weak and infirm himself, yet he healed all others infirmities, even by his word; he was often an hungred, yet he could feed five thousand at one time, and seven thousand at another, upon that which would not have served his Disciples, or but served them; He was wearied with travels, yet he gave rest to wearied souls: At length himself died, and that an ignominious death, notwithstanding he raised the dead by his word, and at length he raiseth himself by his own power. All this is included in this, *we have seen and handled*; we saw him gloriously transfigured on the Mount, where *his countenance did shine as the Sun, and his raiment was white as light*, and two, the greatest persons in the Old Testament came out of Heaven, as it were, to yeeld up the administration of shadows to his substance: and we saw the Heaven opening in the sight of many thousands, and heard a testimony given him from Heaven, *This is my beloved Son, hear him*: And then

then when he was buried, and our hope with him, we saw him risen again, and our hope did rise with him, and then some of us handled his sides, to get full perswasion; and all of us eat and drank and conversed with him fourty dayes: and to make a period, at length we saw him ascending up to Heaven, and a Cloud receiving him as a Chariot, to take him out of our sight. Thus, *the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, as of the only begotten Son of God.*

But besides that which the life and death of Jesus Christ carries ingraven in it of Divinity, there is one miracle, which may be said to transcend all that ever was done, and it is one continued wonder since his *resurrection*, even the vertue and power of that crucified *Saviour*, to conquer the world, by such unsuitable, yea, contrary means and instruments. Heathenish Religion was spread indeed universally through the world, but that was not one Religion, but one name; for as many Nations, as many fancied gods, and in one Nation many. And true it is, that *Mahumetanism* hath spread it self far; but by what means? only by the power of the sword, and the terrour of an Empire. But here is a Doctrine contrary to all the received customs, and imbred opinions of men, without any such means prevailing throughout the world. *Cyrus*, when he was about to conquer neighbouring Nations, gave out a Proclamation, *If any will fol-*
low

low me, if he be a foot-man, I will make him an horse-man, if he have a Village, I will give him a City, if a City, I will bestow on him a Countrey,
 &c. Now mark how contrary the proceeding of our Lord is: Go and preach (saith he) Repent ye, for the Kingdom of God is at hand. Here is his Proclamation, Repent ye. And, if any man will be my Disciple, let him take up his cross and follow me, and deny himself. What disproportioned means? and yet how infinitely greater successe? Cyrus could not gain the *Lacedemonians* to his side for all that, but Christ, though poor, despised and contemptible, while alive, and at length thought to be quite vanquished by the most shameful death, when he is lift up upon the Crosse, to the view and reproach of the world, he draws all men after him: He, by a few fishermen, not Commanders, nor Orators, perswades the world, and within a few years that crucified Lord is adored further and wider then any Empire did ever stretch it self. All the power, majesty, and successe of *Alexander* could never perswade the Nations, no, not his own followers to adore him as God: But here one nailed to the Crosse, Crowned with Thorns, rejected of all men, and within a little space adored, worshiped, suffered for throughout the Nations, yea, Kings and Emperours casting down their Crowns at his feet, many thousands counting it their honour to die upon that account. And do not the Trophies of these Apostolick victories remain to this day,

day, in every corner of the world, after so many hundred years, in so many different, and so far distant Nations? that same Name preached, and all knees bowing to it. These things considered, how much done, and by means worse then nothing, it transcends all the miracles that ever the world wondred at. Now, my beloved, these things I mention for this end, that ye may be perswaded upon sure grounds, that he who is preached unto you, is *God able to save you*, and according to the evidence of these grounds, ye may believe in him, and give that cordial assent to these everlasting truths, and that welcome intertainment to him in your heart that becomes. I think certainly there is very little even of this solid assent and perswasion of the Gospel in the hearts of the most part; because they take things or pames rather implicitly, and never seriously consider what they believe, and upon what grounds. But I know not a more pleasant or profitable meditation then this, if we would enter in a serious consideration of the truth and certainty of these things we have received. O how would such evidence open the heart to an intire and full closure with them, and embracement of them.

S E R M O N V.

1 Joh. 1. 3. That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us, &c.

THere are many things that you may desire to hear, and it may be are usually spoken of in publick, which the generality of mens hearts are more carried after; but truly, I should wrong my self and you both, if I should take upon me to discourse in these things, which it may be some desire, for direction or information concerning the times: for I can neither speak of them with so much certainty of perswasion as were needful, nor can I think it an advantage, to shut out and exclude this which the Apostle takes to declare, as the chief subject of his writing, which must needs be, if such things have place: Therefore I choise rather with the Apostle to declare this unto you, which I can alwayes do with alike certainty, and certainly might alwayes be done to an infinit greater advantage. There are these two peculiar excellencies in the Gospel, or *Word of life*, that it is never unprofitable, nor unseasonable; but doth contain in it at all times the greatest advantage to the souls of men, of infinit more concernment and urgency, then any other thing can be supposed to be. And then we have no doubtful disputations about

bout it, it varies not by times and circumstances, it may be declared with the same full assurance at all times, which certainly cannot be attained in other things. I would gladly know what Paul meant, when he said, *he determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified*, 1 Cor. 2. 2. and that he counted all dross and dung to the super-excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ, Phil. 3. 8. Sure it must amount to so much at least, that this should be the ordinary subject of the Ministers of the Gospel, since they are the Ambassadors of Jesus Christ, not the Orators of the State. Should not all other things be thought impertinent and trivial in respect of this, the salvation of sinners? And what hath a connexion with that, but *Jesus Christ, and the Word of life*?

But though this be the most pleasant and profitable subject, yet I fear, that few of them who pretend a calling to this Embassy, are thus qualified and disposed to speak and declare it, as the Apostle imports, *that which we have heard and seen*, &c. It is true, there was something extraordinary in this, because they were to be the first publishers of this Doctrine, and to wrestle against the rebellion of mens hearts, and the idolatry and superstition of the world: yea, to undertake such a work, as to subdue all Nations by preaching of a crucified man to them, which seemed to reason, the most desperat and impossible employment ever given or taken: therefore it behoved

behoved them to be the eye and ear-witnesses of his Doctrine, Life, Miracles, and all; that being themselves perswaded beyond all the degrees of certainty that reason can afford, they might be the more confident and able to convince and perswade others. But yet there is something that holds by good proportion, that he that declares this eternal life to others, should be well acquainted with it himself; He that preaches Jesus Christ, should first be conversant with him, and become his Disciple and follower, before they can with any fruit become Teachers of others. Therefore the Apostles, *Act. 1. Chooseb out one that had been with them from the beginning, gone in and out with them, seen and heard all.* O! How incongruous is it for many of us to take upon us to declare this unto others, which I fear, few can say they have heard and seen in a spiritual manner, and handled by experience? No question, it prevails usually most with the heart, that comes from the heart: Affection is the fire that is most suitable to set affection on flame. It is a great addition to a mans power and vertue of perswading others, to have a full perswasion settled in his own heart concerning these things. Now it is much to be lamented that there is so little of this, and so few carries the evidence on their hearts and wayes, that they have been with Jesus, conversant in his company. I cannot say, but the Ordinances, that carry their worth and dignity from
 God,

God, and not from men, should be notwithstanding precious to your hearts; and that *Word of life* however, and by whomsoever sent, to you it be spoken, it should be suitably received with gladness of heart. But I confess, there is much of the success disappointed, by the unsuitable carriage and disposition of instruments, which ought to be mourned under, as the greatest judgment of this Nation.

Two principles hath acted this Divine Apostle; the exceeding love of his Master, for he loved much, as he was much beloved, and this carries him on all occasions to give so hearty a testimony to him, as you see, *Joh. 21. 24.* he characterizeth himself, or circumscribes his own name thus; *This is the Disciple that testifieth these things, and wrote these things, and we know his testimony is true.* Where that divine love, which is but the result and overflowing of the love Christ carries to us, fills the heart: this makes the sweetest vent, and most fragrant opening of the mouth, whether in Discourse, or in Prayer, or Preaching that can be. O how it perfects all the commendation of Christ: *Peter, thou me, feed my sheep.* These have a connexion together, the love of Christ in the heart, and the affectionate hearty serious declaration of him to others. And then, another principle hath moved him, the love of others salvation. *These things I declare, that ye may have fellowship with us;* finding in his own experience how

how happy he was, what a Pearl he had found, how rare a Jewel, *eternal life*, he cannot hide it, but proclaims it: His next wish is, Now since I am thus blessed, O that all the world knew, and would come and share with me; I see that unexhausted fountain of life, that unemptyable sea of goodnesse, that infinite fulnesse of grace in Jesus Christ, that I, and you, and all that will, may come and be satisfied, and nothing diminished. There is that immense fulnesse in spiritual things, that superabundance, and infinite excessse over our necessities, that they may be enjoyed by many, by all, without envy or discontent, without prejudice to one anothers fulness, which the skantnesse and meannesse of created things cannot admit. I believe, if Ministers or Christians did taste of this, and had accessse into it to see it, and blesse themselves in it, if they might enter into this treasury, or converse into this company, they would henceforth carry themselves as those who pity the world, and compassionat mankind. A man that were acquainted with this that is in Christ, would not find his heart easily stirred up to envy, or provoked upon others prosperity or exaltation, but rather he would be constrained to commiserat all others, that they will not know nor consider wherein their own true tranquility and absolute satisfaction consists. He that is lifted up to this blessed society, to converse with God, were it not for the compassion and mercy he owes to miserable

rable mankind, he might laugh at the follies and vanities of the world, as we do at children. But as the *φιλανθρωπία*, the affectionat kind love our Saviour carried to humane nature, made him often groan and sigh for his adversaries, and weep over *Jerusalem*, albeit his own joy was full without ebb: So in some measure a Christian learns of Christ to be a lover and pitier of mankind, and then to be most moved with compassion towards others, when we have fullest joy and satisfaction our selves. O that we might be perswaded to seek after these things which may be gotten and kept without clamour and contention, about which there needs be no strife nor envy. O, seek that happinesse in fellowship with God, which having attained, you lack nothing but that others may be as happy.

These things I declare, that ye may have fellowship with us. Oh! that Ministers of the Gospel might say so, and might from their own experience invite others to partake with them, as *Paul* requests others to be followers of him, as he was of Christ; so these who succeed *Paul* in this embassy of reconciliation, and are sent to call to the feast, might upon good ground interpose their own experience thus, O come and eat with us, O come and share with us, for it will suffice us all without division. When some get into the favour of great and eminent persons, and have the honour to be their companions, they will be very loath to invite promiscuously others to
that

that dignity, this Society would beget competition and emulation. But, O! of how different a nature is this fellowship? which whosoever is exalted to, he hath no other grief, but that his poor brethren and fellow-creatures either know not, or will not be so happy: therefore he will alwayes be about the declaring of this to others. But if Ministers cannot use such an expression to invite you to their fellowship, yet I beseech you, beloved in the Lord, let all of us be here invited by the Apostle to partake of that, which will not grieve you to have fellows and companions into, but rather add to your contentment.

Moreover, this may be represented to you, that ye are invited to the very communion with the Apostles, the lowest and meanest amongst you hath this high dignity in your offer, to be fellow-citizens with the Saints, with the eminent pillars of the Church, the Apostles.

It might be thought by the most part of Christians who are more obscure, little known, and almost despised in the world, that they might not have so near access into the Court of this great King: Some would think these who continued with him in his temptations, who waited on his own person, and were made such glorious instruments of the renovation of the world, should have some great preference to all others, and be admitted into the fellowship of the Father and the Son, beyond others; even as many would think, that Christs Mother and Kinsmen

in the flesh, should have had prerogatives and privileges beyond all his followers. But O the wonderful mystery of the equal, free, and irrespective conveyance of this grace of the Gospel in Christ Jesus! *Neither bond nor free, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision. There is one common salvation, Jude v. 3. as well as common faith, Tit. 1. 4. and it is common to Apostles, to Pastors, to People, to as many as shall believe in his Name; so that the poorest and meanest creature is not excluded from the highest privileges of Apostles. We have that to glory in to, in which Paul gloried, that is, the Cross of Christ: we have the same access, by the same Spirit, unto the Father, we have the same Advocate to plead for us, the same blood to cry for us, the same hope of the same inheritance; in a word, we are baptized into one body, and for the essentials and chief substantialis of privilege and comfort, the Head equally respects all the Members. Yea, the Apostles, though they had some peculiar gifts and privileges beyond others, yet they were forbidden to rejoyce in these, but rather in these which were common to them with other Saints. Rejoyce not (saith Christ) that the spirits are subject unto you, but rather rejoyce because your names are written in heaven, Luk. 10. 20. The height and depth of this drowns all other differences.*

Now, my beloved, what can be more said for our comfort? Would you be as happy as *Job*,

as blessed as *Paul*? Would you think your selves well, if it were possible, to be in as near relation and communion with Christ as his Mother and Brethren? Truly, that is not only possible, but it is holden out to you, and you are requested to embrace the offer, and come and share with them. *He that beareth my words and doth them, the same is my mother, and sister, and brother*: You shall be as dear to him as his dearest relations, if you believe in him, and receive his sayings in your heart. Do not then intertain jealous and suspicious thoughts, because you are not like Apostles, or such holy men as are recorded in Scripture? If you forsake not your own mercy, you may have fellowship with them in that which they account their chiefest happiness; there is no difference of quality or condition, no distance of other things, can hinder your communion with them; there are several sizes and growths of Christians, both in light and grace, some have extraordinary raptures and extasies of joy and sweetness; others attain not to that, but are rather kept in attendance and waiting on God in his wayes; but all of them have one common salvation, as the highest have some fellowship with the lowest in his infirmities, so the lowest hath fellowship with the highest in his privileges. Such is the infinite goodnesse of God, that which is absolutely necessary, and most important either to soul or body, is made more universal, both in nature and grace, as the com-

mon light of the Sun to all, and the Sun of Righteousnesse too, in an impartial way, shining on all them that come to him.

SERMON VI.

1 Joh. 1. 3. — *And truly our fellowship is with the Father and the Son, &c.*

IT was both the great wisdom and infinit goodness of God, that he did not only frame a creature capable of society with others of his own kind, but that he fashioned him so, as to be capable of so high an elevation, to have communion and fellowship with himself; it is lesse wonder of Angels, because they are pure incorporeal Spirits, drawing towards a nearer likeness to his nature, which similitude is the ground of communion; but that he would have one of the material and visible creatures below, that for the one half is made of the dust of the earth, advanced to this unconceivable height of privilege, to have fellowship with him; this is a greater wonder: and for this end he breathed into man a spirit from Heaven, that might be capable of conformity and communion with him, who is *the Father of spirits*. Now take this in the plainest apprehension of it, and you cannot but conceive that this is both the honour and happiness

happineſſe of man : It is honour and dignity, I ſay, becauſe the nature of that conſiſts in the applauſe and eſtimation of thoſe that are worthy, teſtified one way or another, and the higheſt degrees of it riſe according to the degree or dignity of the perſons that eſteem us, or give us their fellowſhip and favour. Now truly, according to this rule, the honour is incomparable, and the credit riſeth infinitely above all the airy and fancied dignities of men ; for the Foot-ſtool to be elevated up to the Throne, for the poor contemptible creature to be liſted up to the ſociety and friendſhip of the moſt high and glorious God, the only fountain of all the Hierarchies of Heaven, or degrees upon Earth ; ſo much as the diſtance is between God and us, ſo much proportionably muſt the dignity riſe, to be advanced out of this low eſtate to fellowſhip with God ; the diſtance between creatures is not obſervable in regard of this, and yet poor worms ſwell, if either they be liſted up a little above others, or advanced to familiarity with theſe that are above them. But what is it to pride our ſelves in theſe things ? when we are altogether higher and lower at one view, as graſs-hoppers in his ſight ; therefore *man being in honour, and underſtanding not*, wherein his true honour and dignity conſiſts, he aſſociates himſelf to beaſts ; only the ſoul, that is aſpiring to this communion with God, is extracted out of the dregs of beaſtly mankind, and is elevated above

mankind, and associated to blessed Apostles, and holy Angels, and Spirits made perfect: and that were but little, though it be a honour above Regal or Imperial dignities, but it is infinitely heightened by this, that their association is with God, the blessed and holy Trinity.

Now herein consists mans happinesse too, for the soul being enlarged in its capacity and appetite, far beyond all visible things, it is never fully satiated or put to rest and quiet, till it be possessed with the chiefeft and most universal good, that is, God; and then all the motions of desires cease, then the soul rests from its labours, then there is a peace and eternal rest proclaimed in the desires of the soul, *Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with me*, Psal. 116. 7. O! what a poor short requiem do men sing to their own hearts from other enjoyments? Oftentimes mens hearts, whether dreaming or waking, speak in this manner, *Soul take thy rest*; but how ill grounded is that peace, and how false a rest, daily experience in part witnesseth, and the last day will fully declare? But, O! how much better and wiser were it for you, to seek the favour and light of his countenance upon you, and to be united to him who is the fountain of life, so ye might truly, without hazard of such a sad reprehension as that fool got, or grievous disappointment, say, *Soul take thy rest in God*.

Man was advanced to this dignity and happinesse,

ness, but he kept not his station, for that great Dragon falling down from that pinnacle of honour he had in Heaven, drew down with him *the third part of the stars of Heaven, and cast them to the earth*: and thus, man who was in honour, is now associated with, and made like to beasts, or devils, he is a stranger to God from the womb, all the imaginations of his heart tend to distance from God, he is exiled and banished from Gods presence, the type whereof was his being driven out of the Garden, and yet he is not long out, nor far away, when the infinit love of God moves an Embassage to send after him, and to recall him; many messengers are sent before-hand to prepare the way, and to dispose mens hearts to peace; many prophecies were, and fore-intimations of that great Embassage of love, which at length appeared; for *God sent his Son, his own Son*, to take away the difference, and make up the distance. And this is the thing that is declared unto us by these eye and ear-witnesses, to this end that we may know how to return to that blessed society which we had forsaken, to our own eternal prejudice. Is man banished out of the Paradise of God into the accursed earth? Then the Son is sent out from his own Pallace and the Paradise above, to come into this world, and to save the world. Is there such a gulf between us and Heaven? Christ hath put his own body between, to fill it up. Do the Cherubims watch with flaming fire to keep us from life? Then

Then the Son hath shed his own blood in abundance, to quench that fire, and so to pacify and compose all in Heaven and Earth. Is there such odds and enmity between the families of Heaven and Earth? He sent his Son the chief heir, and married him with our nature, and in that eternal marriage of our nature with him, he hath buried in everlasting oblivion all the difference, and opened a way for a nearer and dearer friendship with God then was before. And whence was it, I pray you, that God dwelt among men? First in a Tabernacle, then in a fixed Temple, even among the rebellious sons of men; and that so many were admitted and advanced again to communion with God; *Abraham* had the honour to be the friend of God, (O incomparable title! comprehending more then King or Emperour) Was it not all from this, the anticipating vertue of that uniting and peace-making sacrifice? It was for his sake who was to come, and in his flesh to lay a sure foundation for eternal peace and friendship between God and man.

Now you see the ground of our restitution to that primitive fellowship with God, my earnest desire is that ye would lay hold on this opportunity. Is such an high thing in your offer? yea, are you earnestly invited to it by the *Father* and the *Son*? then sure it might at the first hearing beget some inward desire, and kindle up some holy ambition after such a happiness. Before we know further what is in it, (for the
very

very first sound of it imports some special and incomparable priviledge) might not our hearts be inflamed, and ought we not to enquire at our own hearts, and speak thus unto them, Have I lived so long a stranger to God the fountain of my life? Am I so far bewitched with the deceitful vanities of the world, as not to think it incomparably better, to rise up above all created things, to communicat with the *Father* and the *Son*? And shall I go hence without God and without Christ, when fellowship with them is daily, freely, and plentifully holden forth? I beseech you consider where it must begin, and what must be laid down for the foundation of this communion, even your union with Jesus Christ the Mediator between God and man; and you cannot be one with him, but by forsaking your selves, and believing in him; and thence flows that constant abode and dwelling in him, which is the mutual intertainment of Christ and a soul, after their meeting together. *Can two walk together except they be agreed?* We are by nature enemies to God; Now certainly reconciliation and agreement must interveen by the blood of the Cross, before any friendly and familiar society be kept. Let this then be your first study, and it is first declared in the Gospel, Jesus Christ is holden out as partaking with you in all your infirmities, he is represented as having fellowship with us in our sins and curses, in our afflictions and crosses, he hath fellowship in our

our nature to bear our sins and infirmities. Now since he hath partaken in these, you are invited to come and have fellowship with him in his gifts and graces, in the precious merits of his death and suffering, in his rising again and returning to glory. And this is the exchange he makes and declares in the Gospel, I have taken your sins and curses, O come and take my graces, and that which is purchased by my blood. Now this is the first beginning of a souls renewed fellowship with God, and it is the foundation of all that is to come, to imbrace this offer, to accept him cordially as he is presented, and to pacifie and quiet our own hearts by faith in that he hath done. And this being once laid down as the ground-stone, the soul will grow up into more communion with him.

To speak aright of this communion, would require more acquaintance with it, then readily will be found amongst us: but it is more easie to understand in what it is exercised and intertained, then to bring up our hearts unto it. Certainly it must neither be taken so low and wide, as if it consisted all in these external duties, and approaches of men to God; for there is nothing capable of communion with the *Father of spirits*, but a *Spirit*; and sure I am, the most part of us removes them, and acts little that way. It is a lamentable thing that men pretend to please God with such vain empty shows, and bodily appearances, without any serious ex-
ercise

ercise of their souls, and attention of their minds in divine worship. Neither yet must it be taken so high, and made so narrow, as if it consisted only in these ravishments of the soul after God, which are joyed with extraordinary sweetnesse and joy, or in such rare pieces of accessse and liberty; for though that be a part of it, yet is it neither universal to all Gods children, nor yet constant in any. There may be some solid serious attendance on God in his Ordinances, which may have more true substantial life in it, and more of the marrow of Christianity in it, though a soul should not be acquainted with these raptures, nor ever carried without the Line of an equal walking with God. Therefore that which I would exhort you to, is to acquaint your selves with *Jesús Christ*, and you shall find a new way opened in him, by which you may boldly come to God, and having come to God in him, you are called to walk with him, to intertain that acquaintance that is made, till all the distance and estrangednesse of your hearts be worn out. And I know not any thing which is more apt either to beget, or preserve this fellowship, then the communication of your spirits often with him in prayer, and with his word in meditation, and this is not to be discharged as a custome, but the love of God within, drawing the heart willingly towards communication with him, and constraining to pour out your requests to him, and wait on him, even though

ye should not find that sensible sweetnesse that sometimes is found. It were an happy advancement in this fellowship, if converse with God, whether in prayer and solemn retirements, or in meditation, or in our ordinary walking, were become the delight of our hearts, at least that they might be carried that way towards the intertaining the thoughts of his Majesty, his Glory, and Grace, and Goodness, and Wisdome shining every where, as from a natural instinct, even when we are not ingaged with the present allurements of that sweetnesse that sometimes accompanies it.

SERMON VII.

I Joh. 1. 3. — And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

Verf. 4. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full,

IT was sin that did first break off that fellowship that was between God and man, and cut off that blessed society, in which the honour and happinesse of man consisted; but that fundamental bond being loosed, it hath likewise untied all the links of society of men among themselves,

selves, and made such a general disperſion and diſſipation of mankind, that they are almoſt like wild beaſts, raging up and down; and in this, wilder then beaſts, that they devour one another, which beaſts do not in their own kind; and they are like fiſhes of the Sea, without rule and government. Though there be ſome remnants of a ſociable inclination in all men, that ſhews it ſelf in their combinings in ſocieties, and erecting governments; yet generally that which is the true bond and ligament of men, which alone can truly knit them together, is broken, that is *love, the love of God and our neighbours*; And therefore notwithstanding of all the means uſed to reduce, and to contain mankind in order and harmony by government; yet there are nothing but continual rents, diſtractions, diſſipations, diviſions, and diſſolutions in Commonwealths amongſt themſelves, and between Nations; ſo that all men may be represented as Lions, Tigers, Wolves, Serpents, and ſuch like unfociable creatures, till the Goſpel come to tame and ſubdue them, as it is often holden out in the Prophets, *Iſai.* 2. 4. and 11. 6, 7, 8. and 65. 25.

Now indeed you have here the expreſs end and purpoſe of the Goſpel, to make up theſe two great breaches in the creature, between God and men, and between men and men. It is a Goſpel of peace; where ever it takes hold of mens ſpirits, it reduceth all to a peaceable temper, joyns them to God, and one to another; for the ve-

ry sum and substance of it is the love of God to mankind, and proposed for this end, to engage the love of man again; and love is the glew, the cement that alone will conjoyn hearts unto this fellowship. It is a strange thing, and much to be lamented, that Christendome should be a *field of blood*, an *Aceldama*, beyond other places of the world: that where the Gospel is pretended to be received, that men have so far put off even humanity, as thus to bite and devour one another. Certainly it is, because where it is preached it is not believed: therefore *sin taketh occasion by it to become the more sinful*; alwayes let us take heed to this, that it is the great purpose and grand design of the Gospel preached to us, to restore us to a blessed society and fellowship with the Father, and withal, to a sweet fellowship amongst our selvss; for both you see are here.

We are called to fellowship with the Father, and what is that? but to have the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ thy Father, and thou to be his son by adoption of grace: It is certainly the very marrow and extract of the whole Covenant, and all the promises thereof, *I will be your Father, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty*, 2 Cor. 6. 18. *I go* (saith Christ) *to your Father and my Father, and to your God and my God.* O what a sweet complication and interchange of relations, *Jeb. 20. 17.*

I will

I will be your God, and ye shall be my people, here is the Epitome of all happineſſe and felicity; In this word all is incloſed, and without this, nothing is to be found that deſerves the deſires of an immortal ſpirit: For hence it follows, that a ſoul is filled with *the all-fulneſſe of God*, Eph. 3. 19. for that is made over to thee who believes the Goſpel, and thou haſt as real a right and title to it, as men have to their fathers inheritance. Then to have fellowſhip with his Son Jeſus Chriſt, is another branch of this dignity, and this is that which introduceth the other, Chriſt is the middle perſon, the Mediator between God and man, given for this end, to recover men from their woful diſperſion, and ſeparation from God, and reduce them again to that bleſſed ſociety: and therefore our acquaintance, as it were, firſt begins with him, and by him we are led to the Father, *No man can come to the Father but by the Son*: Therefore, if you have his frienſhip, you have done the buſineſs, *for he and his Father is one.*

Now this fellowſhip, to branch it forth more particularly, is either real, or perſonal: Real, I mean, *communio Bonorum*, a communion of all good things, a communion with him in his Nature, Offices, and Benefits, and this muſt be laid down as the foundation-ſtone of this fellowſhip, he came near us, to partake of fleſh and blood with us, that we might have a way, a new and living way conſecrated, *even the nail of his fleſh,*

flesh, to come to God by; for certainly this gives boldness to a soul to draw near to God, with some expectation of success and acceptance, when it is seriously considered, that our nature is so nearly conjoynd already to God; by this step a soul climbs up to the Majesty of God, and by means of this, *we become partakers of the Divine Nature*, as God of Humane Nature, 1 Pet. 1. 4. So by the same degrees we ascend to God, that God hath descended to us; he drew near us by our nature, and we by the intervention of that same ascend to him, and receive his image and stamp on our souls: for the Lord did stamp his own image upon Christs Humane Nature, to make it a pattern to us, and to represent to us, as in a visible symbole and pledge, what impression he would put upon us: Then we have fellowship with him in his Offices; I need not branch them out severally, you know what he was anointed for; to be a Priest, to offer sacrifice, and reconcile us to God, and to make intercession for us; to be a King, to rule us by his Word and Spirit, and defend us against our enemies; to be a Prophet, to reveal the will of God to us, and instruct us in the same. Here is a large field of fellowship, we have communion by faith in Jesus Christ, to the great advantage and benefit of all these; there is nothing in them but it relates to us, and redounds to us; the living virtue of that sacrifice, is as fresh and recent this day, to send up a favour of rest to

Heaven, and to pacifie a troubled conscience, as the first day it was offered : That perfect sacrifice is as available to thy soul, as if thou had offered it thy self, and this day ye have the benefite of his prayers in Heaven, we partake of the strong cryes and tears in the days of his flesh, and of intercession since, more then of our own supplications. What shall I say ? ye have one to teach you all things that is needful for you; one to subdue your sins under you; and by vertue of fellowship with Jesus Christ in these Offices, there is something derived from it, and communicated to us by it, that *we should be Kings and Priests to God our Father; Kings* to rule over our own spirits and lusts, in as far as grace reigns in us to eternal life, and that is truly a heroick royal spirit, that overcomes himself and the world; and *Priests, to offer unto God continually the sacrifice of prayer and praises,* 1 Pet. 1. 3, 4, 5. which are sweet smelling and pleasant in his sight; yea, we should offer up our own bodies as a reasonable service, Rom. 12. 1. and this is a holy and living sacrifice, when we dedicat and consecrat all our faculties, members, and abilities to his will and service; and do not spare to kill our lusts, which are his and our enemies.

Let us sum up all in this, whatsoever grace or gift is in Christ Jesus, whatsoever preheminance he hath above Angels and men; whatsoever he purchased, he purchased by his obedient life, and patience in death, there is nothing of all

that, but the soul may be admitted to fellowship in it, by its union with him by faith; have him, and have all that he hath: Faith makes him yours, and all that he hath is a consequential appendix to himself: the Word of the Gospel offers him freely to you, with all his benefits, interests, and advantages, O that our hearts may be induced to open to him.

Now being thus united to Jesus Christ, that which I would perswade next to, is a personal communion, that is, a suitable intertainment of him, a conjunction of your soul to him by love, and a conspiracy of all your endeavours henceforth to please him: It is certain, that true friendship is founded on a conjunction and harmony of souls by affection, by which they cease to be two, and becomes in a manner one; for love makes a kind of transport of the soul into another, and then all particular and proper interests are drowned in oblivion, no more *mine* and *thine*, but he makes an interchange, *mine thine, and thine mine, my heart thine, and thy honour mine*. Now certain it is, that in this God hath given us a rare pattern, and leads the way; for he declares his love to the world, in the rarest effects of it, which give the clearest demonstrations possible; God so loved the world, that he sent his Son: And you have the most infallible argument of the Sons love, *greater love hath no man than this, to lay down his life for his friends, but he for his enemies*. Now then, you see how the

the heart of God and his Son Jesus Christ is fixed from everlasting on the sons of men so unalterably, and so fully set towards them, that it hath transported the *Son* out of his own glory, and brought him down in the state of a servant. But it is not yet known what particular persons are thus fixed upon, untill that everlasting love break out from under ground, in the ingagement of thy souls love to him, and till he have fastned this chain, and set this seal on thy heart, which makes thee impatient to want him: thou knowest not the seal that was on his heart from eternity. But now the love of a believer being the result of his love, this is it that is the source and spring of constant communion: and it vents it self in converse with God, and daily intertainment of him in our spirits and wayes; There is a keeping of company with him in prayer and meditation, and all the Ordinances; there is a communication and familiar conference of the heart with him, either in thinking on him, or pouring out our requests to him; there is a mutual and daily intercourse and correspondence of that soul with God, in answering his word by obedience, in praying to him, and receiving answers from him, and then returning his answer again with a letter of thanks and praise, as it were; these are the wayes to increase that love of God, and kindle it up to a higher flame; and it being thus increased, it gathers in all the in-deavours and abilities of the soul, and sets all

on fire, as a sweet smelling sacrifice to please him: It is henceforth the great study of the soul, to remove all things that are offensive to him; for the intertaining of sin, his enemy, is most inconsistent with this true fellowship and friendship: *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not bear me,* Psal. 66. 18: This will marr that sweet correspondence in prayer and praises; for it is a breach of peace and Covenant, to regard and maintain his enemies; therefore the soul that loves God, will study to compose it self in all things to his good pleasure, as well as his love that is strong as death, puts him upon a careful watching, to do all things for our profite; and so this takes in our whole carriage and walking in religious approaches, or in common businesses, to have this as our great design, *Conversing with God, and walking to all well-pleasing.*

Now if we were once enrolled in this blessed fellowship with the Father and the Son, then it follows as a fruit and result of this, that we should have fellowship one with another, and truly the more unity with God, the more unity amongst our selves; for he is the uniting, cementing principle: he is the Center of all Christians, and as Lines, the further they are from the Center, the farrer distant they are one from another; so the distance and elongation of souls from God, sets them at furthest distance amongst themselves: The nearer we come every one to Jesus Christ, the nearer we joyn in affection one
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to another: and this is imported in that of Christ's Prayer, *That they may be one in us*, Joh. 17. 21, 22. No unity but in that *one Lord*, and no perfect unity but in a perfect union with him. I would exhort to study this more, to have fellowship one with another, as members of the same body, by sympathy, by mutual helping one another in spiritual and temporal things: Even amongst Christians that live obscurely in a City, in a Village, there is not that harmonious agreement and consent of hearts, that contention and plea of love, of gentleness, and forbearance, who shall exercise most of that; but there are many jealousies, heart-burnings, grudgings, strifes, evil speakings, &c. to the stumbling of others, and the weakening of your selves, which certainly argue that ye are much carnal, and walk as men, and that the love of God, and fellowship with him is waxed cold, and is languished and dead, &c.

and these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

SERMON VIII.

Joh. 1. 4. *And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.*

All motions tend to rest and quietness, we see daily in the motions below, and we believe is also of the circular revolutions of the

Heavens above, that there is a day coming in which they shall cease, as having performed all they were appointed for; And as it is in things natural, so it is in things rational in a more eminent way, their desires, affections, and actions, which are the motions, and stretches of the soul towards that it desires, and apprehends as good, ends of their own nature, and are directed by the very intention of the soul, to some rest and tranquillity, some joy and contentation of spirit. If other things that have no knowledge, have their center of rest, how much more must man, who is an understanding creature, have it by the ordination and appointment of God? But there is this wide difference in the point of capacity of happiness, between man and other creatures, that they, whatsoever excellent virtues or properties they have, yet know them not themselves, and so can neither enjoy what excellency themselves have, nor have use of what is in others; for, to what purpose is it to shine forth, if there be no eye to see? What advantage hath the Rose in its fragrancy, if it cannot smell it self? That which is not perceived, is as if it were not. And therefore it is an evident testimony that all these visible things were created, not for themselves, but for mans sake who knows them, can use them, and enjoy them: here is then the peculiar capacity that God hath given to man, to discern and know what he seeks, what he hath, and possesses, that so he may be able to enjoy it,
or

or use it, according to the nature of it. This is a great point of Gods Image, and conformity with him, whose infinit blessednesse and joy riseth from that perfect comprehension, and intuitive beholding of himself, and his own incomprehensible riches; So then, mans happiness, or misery must depend upon this, both what the soul fixeth upon, and what it apprehendeth to be in it; for, if that eternal and universal good, the all-fulnesse of God, be the center of the souls desires and endeavours, and there be apprehended and discovered in God, that infinit excellency, and variety of delights, which nothing else can afford so much as a shadow of, then, there cannot but result from such a conjunction of the souls apprehension, suitable to the fulnesse of God, and of the excellency and goodnesse of God, suitable to the desires of the soul, such a rest and tranquillity, such joy and satisfaction, as cannot choose but make the soul infinitely happier then the enjoyment of any other thing could do.

This being the thing then, which all mens desires naturally tend unto, this tranquillity and perfect satisfaction of the heart, being that which carries all mens hearts after it, and that which men seek for it self, and which they seek in all other things; the great misery of man is, that he mistakes the way to it, and seeks it where it is not to be found. The generality of men, are so far degenerated both from the impression of a divine Majesty, and the sense of an immortal being

ing within themselves, that they imagine to content, and ease their own hearts, in these outward, unconstant, perishing things, and so their life is spent in catching at shadows, in feeding on the wind, in labouring in the fire. There is nothing so plentifully satisfies our expectations, as can quite the cost, and recompence the expences of our labour, toil, grief, and travel about it; there is nothing therefore but a continual, restless agitation of the heart, from one thing to another, and that in a round circling about, from one thing that now displeases or disappoints, to things that were formerly loathed; as a sick man turns him from one side to another, or changes beds often, and at length returns, expecting to find some ease where he lay at first. And it may be judged, that all circular motions are eternal, and so they can never be supposed to attain their end, that is rest and tranquillity; therefore a soul thus carried in a round, by the vain imaginations of his heart, is likely never to settle and find solid rest and peace. Nay, how is it possible that they can give that tranquillity and contentation to the heart and soul of man, that are so utterly in their natures disproportioned to it? both because they are only suited to the senses, and likewise, for that they are changeable. Now the soul is framed with a higher capacity, and can no more be satiated with visible things, then a man that is hungry can be satisfied with gold; and besides, it is immortal, and must have

have something to survive all the changes of time, and therefore is likely to rest no where but in that which hath eternal stability. Now though these things cannot truly fill the heart, yet they swell the belly, like the east wind, or like the prodigals husks, fill it with wind, which causeth many torments and distempers in the soul; and though they cannot give ease, yet *they may be as thorns to prick and pierce a man through with many sorrows*, as our Saviour speaks: so that there is no more wisdom or gain in this, then in gathering an armfull of thorns, and inclosing and preasing hard unto them, the more hardly and strongly we grip them, the more grievously they pierce us; or as if a man would flee into a hedge of thorns in a tempest, the further he thrust into it, he is the worse pricked; and that which he is fallen into, is worse then that he fleeth from. I am sure all your experiences give a harmonious testimony to this, that there is no solid, permanent, constant, and equable heart-joy and contentation in all the fancied and imaginary felicities that this world adores. There is nothing of these things, that is not lesser, and lower in actual possession, nor in the first apprehension of them afar off. Nothing in them answers either our desires or expectations; and therefore, in stead of peace and tranquillity, they breed more inward torment and disquiet, because of that necessary and inevitable disappointment that attends them. Therefore the Apostle

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passeth all these things in silence, when he is to write of purpose, to give a fulnesse of joy; for he knows that in them there is neither that joy, nor that fulnesse of joy he would wish for them; but it is other things he writes for this end.

Now indeed there hath been some wiser then others, that have their apprehension far above the rest of mankind, and have laboured to frame some rules and precepts to lead man into this true rest and tranquillity. And truly, in this they have done much to discover the vanity and madnesse of the common practice of men; and to draw man from sensible and outward things, to things invisible and spiritual; yet there is a defectiveness in all the rules that natural reason can reach unto; there is some crookedness which adheres to them, which shews our departure from our original. There are many excellent discourses of morality in Heathens Writings, which may be very subservient to a Christian, and useful to the composing and settling of his mind, amidst all the fluctuations and uncertainties of this world: they may come well in as Subsidies and Guards to a Christians heart, to preserve that peace and joy it hath from God, and keep out the ordinary tumultuous passions that disturb the most part of men: But here is the lamentable failing, that while they call a man off things without, as adventitious, they lead him but in to his own spirit within, as if he could there find that rest in the very enjoyment
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of his poor miserable wretched self. but Christ Jesus calls us into our own spirits, not to dwell there; for O, what a loathsome and irksome habitation is a defiled heart, and a guilty conscience? but rather that finding nothing of that joy and refreshment within, we may then freely and fully forsake our selves, as well as the world without, and transport in to God in Christ; the only habitation of joy and delight; that being filled with anguish from the world, and from our selves; we may more willingly divorce from both, and agree to joyn unto Jesus Christ, and to embrace him in our hearts, who is the only fountain of life and joy; who had no other errand and businesse from Heaven, but to repair mans joy, as grievous a breach as any in the Creation: a thing as much missed and sought after, as any thing, yea, sought after in all things that are sought: *Joh. 15. 11. These things I have spoken to you that your joy may be full.* Therefore the Apostle propounds this as the end of his writing on this subject, *the word of life, these things I write that your joy may be full,* and the way to attain this fulness of joy, he expressed in the former verse, *by fellowship with the Father and the Son.*

That which makes all other things disproportioned to the soul of man, to give it this joy, is the extream unsuitableness between them; that the soul hath an infinit capacity, and besides an immortality of endurance, but they are condemned under impotency to supply that infinit void, and

and inconstancy by which they must needs perish, and leave the soul without all comfort, and with more anxiety. But in these things written here, we find all things suited and proportioned to the very great exigence of the soul. There is a suitableness in them, because of their spiritual nature, whereby they may close immediately with thy spirit, other things are material, and corporeal, and what union, what fellowship can a spirit be supposed to have with them? they are extrinseck, advenient things, that never come to a nearer union with thy soul; and though they could, they would debase thy soul, and not exalt it, because of a baser inferiour Nature. But these things, *Jesus Christ, eternal life in him, these precious promises of the Gospel, these spiritual priviledges of fellowship, &c.* these are of a more divine nature, and by meditation and faith, souls come to close with them: These are inward things, more near the soul than believes, then himself is to himself; and so he may alwayes carry them about in his heart, which may be a spring of everlasting joy. *This no man can take from him, Joh. 16. 22.* For the ground and fountain is inward, seated without the reach of all these vicissitudes and changes: Then as they have a suitableness, so they have a fulnesse in them, a great fulnesse of joy: They are cordials to the heart, things that are in their own nature refreshing to the soul, and apt to beget heart-joy. Other things are not suitable to this, to produce any

any such inward soul-complacency; the things that are from without, reach not so deep as the heart, they make their impressions rather on the outward senses, to tickle and please them, or the countenance, to put some pleasing shape upon it : but the wise man pronounceth all these joys that arise from external things, to be superficial, only skin-deep, *in the midst of laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness*, Prov. 14. 13. *Extrema gaudii luctus occupat.* There is no solid recreation to the soul, in its retired thoughts from all the delights of the senses : it is but like the pleasure of the itch, which no man esteems pleasure. But besides, as the things of the Gospel affect the heart and soul, by bringing soul-mercies, and treasures, as forgiveness of sin, hope of Heaven, &c. so there is a fulness in them, which may answerably fill all the corners of the heart with joy ; there is an unexhaustedness in these things, an universality in Christ, *all in all, all the treasures of wisdom are in him* : and may not this cause surely an high spring-tide of joy. The heart is eased upon the lowest clear apprehension of Christ and the Gospel, it gives a heart-serenity and calmness to a troubled soul, that nothing else could do, yet to make up the fulness of joy, as well as the solidity of it ; to extend the measure of it, as well as to beget the true quality of it ; it is requisite that not only there be a fulness in the object, that is full, superabundant, ample
matter

matter of rejoycing ; but there must be a kind of fulnesse in the apprehension, it must be represented fully as it is, and the clouds of unbelief scattered ; and then indeed, upon the full aspect of the Gospel, and Christ in it, there is a fulnesse of joy that flows in to the soul, as the Sea is filled upon the full aspect of the Moon. Oh, that we could believe this, that there is a fulnesse of joy here, and no where else ; certainly this alone being pondered and sunk into our hearts, would be a powerful reformer in us, and among us ; How would it carry mens hearts to a disgracing and despising all the things that are held in admiration by men ? How would it turn the channel of mens judgments, opinions, affections, and conversations ? for certainly whithersoever the Tide of joy flows, thither the heart is carried, and it is that all men are seeking, though they take many contrary and diverse wayes, as their own fancy leads them. Now if once this were established in thy soul, that here is that true and fulnesse of joy, which elsewhere is ignorantly and vainly sought ; would it not divert thy desires, and turn the current of thy affections and endeavours, to fall into this Ocean of gladnesse and delight ? Elsewhere there is neither true joy, nor full joy, *nec verum nec plenum gaudium* ; there is no verity in it, it is but an external garb and shadow, and there is no plenty or fulnesse in it ; it fills not the hand of the reaper, it satisfieth not his very hunger. But here,

here, when a soul is possessed with Christ by faith, and dwelleth in God by love, there is both reality and plenty: all the dimensions of the heart may be filled up; Some allegorize upon the triangular composition of mans heart, that no orbicular thing, such as this world, can fill it exactly without vacuity, but only the blessed and holy Trinity. Truly we may conceive, this fulnesse of joy, excluding all the latent griefs of the heart, and filling up all the vacant corners, doth flow from that blessed fellowship of the *Father and the Son*. Now though these two be only mentioned, yet the *Holy Ghost* must not be excluded, for the Apostolick Prayer doth attribute chiefly our fellowship with God to the *Spirit*, so that it is the *Spirit* unites our hearts, and associates them to God, that seems to correspond between him and us: So then there is such a fellowship with the *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, that leaves no vacuity in the heart, that fills all the dimensions and corners of it with peace and joy.

But add unto this, in the third place, that these things have not only a fulnesse, but withal a durability; not only plenty, but besides, eternity and perpetuity, to correspond to the immortality of the soul; And this certainly is a great congruity, and so makes up much beauty and harmony; for what more incongruous and unsuitable, then for an immortal spirit to spend it self, and give up it self to that which is not,
which

which must leave it, which is mortal, and tading in its own nature, without which, it must continue infinitely longer then it can enjoy it? And what more comely, then for an immortal thing to associat to eternal things, and to derive its joy from an eternal spring? For then, when all things visible are done away, and things mortal abolished, then *its joy none can take from it*; because it takes its joy from that, which must survive all these changes. Suppose any thing could for the present give a fulness of joy, and absolute content to the heart, yet if we imagine that thing may be separated and disjoyned from the heart, and cease to be, certainly the very expectation of such an eternal separation, would almost extinguish all the joy, and make it dry up of the fulnesse: For, may a soul think, What shall I do for ever when this Well dryes? Whence shall I draw water of joy? Out of what Well? But now, that fear is removed, and the soul needs not losse the sweetness of the present enjoyment of God, through anxious foresight of the future, because he may know, that the perfect fulnesse that shall never ebb, is but coming, and the Sun is but ascending yet towards the Meridian, from whence he shall never go down, but stand fixed, to be the eternal wonder and delight of Angels and men.

Now though it be true, that Christians here, have neither that plenty, nor that perpetuity of this joy, that the object of it gives ground
for;

for; though their hearts be often filled with griefs and sorrows, partly from outward, partly from inward evils and afflictions; yet certainly this ariseth but from the dark apprehension, dim belief, and slight consideration of these things that Christ spoke, and his Apostles wrote unto us; We might, no question, keep our hearts in more peace and tranquillity, in all the commotions of the times, or alterations in our selves, if we did more stedfastly believe the Gospel, and keep more constant fellowship with God. But however it be, there is radically a fulnesse of joy in every believers heart, that seed is sown, that shall one day be ripe of fulnesse of joy, it is alwayes lying at the root, and reserved for them. O, let us lay these things to heart, which being laid to heart, and laid up in the heart, will fill it with this sweet fragrant perfume of peace and joy. They are written for this end, let us hear them for this end too, that our joy may be full. It is true indeed, that this fulnesse of joy suits only the life to come, when the vessel is both enlarged and strengthened to contain it: Things that have strong spirits in them, must have strong new bottles; such as our crazy mortal bodies are now; therefore the Lord hath reserved the just fulnesse, the overflowings of this joy, for the time that the soul shall be purified from all sin, and the body delivered from all corruption: Because that in links in many corners of the heart now, therefore this joy cannot fill up the heart,

and all the vacuities of it ; for it is of so pure and heavenly a nature , that it will not compound and intermingle with sin , or sinful lusts ; but when nothing of that remains in the heart, then it flows in apace, and leaves no corner of the heart unsatisfied and unsupplied. I would have you, who get some tastes of this joy and peace by the way, not disquieted and troubled , because it abides not to be ordinary food ; if you be set down again to your ordinary spare dyet of Manna in the Wildernesse , and have not these first fruits and Grapes of Canaan often sent to you ; think it not strange, for the fulnesse which you seek, you are not capable of here, but you shall be capable of it hereafter. You ought with patience to wait for that day, *when your joy shall be full*, as Christ is full, *full measure, beaped up, and running over*, will he meet out unto you then : and this shall be without the fear of any ebb or diminution of it for all eternity ; neither shall this fulnesse, and constant fulnesse, cloy the soul, or breed any satiety in it : there is fulnesse of joy without surfeit, without satiety ; that which they have, they shall alwayes desire, and that which they desire, they shall alwayes have : everlasting desire, and everlasting delight, being married together in their fulnesse. But yet so much is attainable here, as may truly be called fulnesse, in regard of the world ; The fulnesse of joy that all the pleasures of this earth can afford, is but scarcety and want, to the inward fulnesse
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of joy and contentation, the poorest believers may have in God, reconciled in Christ. That which the wise man gives as the character of all earthly joy, suits well, *I said of laughter, it is mad, and of mirth, what doth it?* Eccl. 2. 2. Truly it cannot be supposed to be more real, then that which is the ground and spring of it. It must be a perfunctorious, superficial, and empty joy, that is derived and distilled from such vanities. Nay, there is a madnesse in it besides, for mens apprehensions to swell so excessively, towards poor, narrow, and limited things; it is a monster in reason, to put such value upon nothing, and make our selves glad upon our own dreams and fancies; There is such a manifest abuse and violation of reason in it, that it can be supposed to proceed from nothing but a distemper in mens hearts. But besides this, there are two other characters of it given, *Prov. 14. 13. Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heavinesse.* There is no pure earthly joy; for it hath alwayes a mixture of grief and sadnesse in the inward retired closet of the heart; it is of such deadnesse and inefficacy, that it drives not out of the heart all discontentments and anxieties; but if the most jovial man, that seems to be transported with his delights, would but retire within, and examine his own conscience, he would find those delights have but little power to affect his heart; he would find terrible and dreadful representations there, that

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his joyes may well for a time darken them, but cannot drive them away: and then it is the very natural law, and fatal necessity, that grief follows these joys at the heels, yea, is perpetually attending them, to come in their place; God hath so conjoynd them together, and so disposed them, that mens joy shall be mingled with grief, but their grief is pure and unmixed; and that he who draws up joy to him from the creatures, must draw grief and vexation in that same chain, inseparably annexed to it by the wise ordination of God.

But there are joys of the *Holy Ghost*, arising from the intimation and apprehension of the Gospel, from the consideration of the grace and goodnesse of God manifested in it, and the experience of that in the soul, which are of another stamp and nature. These indeed affect the heart, and give the answer of a good conscience, in the blood of Christ, which is a continual feast; these drive out the bitter and dreadful apprehensions of sin and wrath; these sweeten and refresh the soul in all worldly afflictions and griefs: *The heart of man knoweth his own bitterness, and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy, Prov. 13. 10.* Indeed, the torments and perplexities of a troubled soul, are better felt by themselves, then known by others, and so are the joys of that heart that apprehends Jesus Christ, and peace purchased in him, they are such, as no man that is a stranger to such things in his experience

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can apprehend. *It is a joy unspeakable*; O what unspeakable content gives it to the heart. And truly if you did not interpose the clouds of unbelief and sin between you and his shining countenance, there needed not be so often an Eclipse in the joys of believers; yet the day is coming that ye shall see him fully as he is, and nothing be interposed between you and him, and then your joy shall be full, &c.

S E R M O N I X.

1 Joh. 1. 5. This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, &c.

THe great design of the Gospel is to make up the breach of mans joy, and open up the way to the fulnesse of it: and therefore it is the *good news and glad tidings of great joy*, the only best message that ever came to the world. Now it shews unto us the channel, that this river of gladnesse and joy runs into; it discovers what is the way of the conveyance of it to the soul, and what are the banks it runs between, and that is, *fellowship with the Father and the Son*. In this channel that river of delight runs, between the banks of the love of God to us, and our love

to him. Herein a soul is happy, and accounts it self happy; and truly, in so much do we profite by the Word, and answer the design of the Gospel, by how much we estimat our happiness from this alone, from the communication of God to us. Whensoever the Gospel takes hold of your hearts, it will undoubtedly frame them to this, to a measuring of all blessednesse from God alone: and this will carry the heart to an undervaluing of all other things, as being too low, and unworthy for this end; and so to a forsaking of any thing for the closer enjoyment of God. I fear many believers are little acquainted with this joy, because they draw not their joy singly out of the pure fountain of delight; but turn aside to other external comforts, and drown their souls in them. Now indeed, these two cannot well consist together, if we take in any thing else to make up our happiness and comfort, so much we lose of God and that which is truly spiritual; and therefore our hearts would be more purified from carnal delights, if we would have experience of this joy: we must hang only upon his countenance and company, else we lose the sweetness of it.

Now the Apostle prosecutes this further, to discover what conformity must be between them that should keep this fellowship; and what likeness of nature and qualities is necessary for them who would be happy in Gods society. This is the message we have heard (saith he) and which

we declare unto you, that God is light, &c. Take this joyntly, with that which went before; This we declare, that ye may have fellowship with the Father, and the Son. And to the end this fellowship may hold, and yeeld you fulnesse of joy, it is necessary that the nature of God be laid down, as the pattern to which ye must be conform. God is light, and therefore you must be light too, if ye would have fellowship with that pure light. Now this, I say is the full message of the Gospel, that which was sent down from Heaven, with the Son of God, the Messenger of the Covenant, and which the Apostles heard from him; Indeed the very manner of the proposal of these things might stir up our hearts to attention, and make us more serious then commonly we are, That there is one, and such an one sent from Heaven, with such an embassage as this is; to invite us to society with God again, one whose interest lyes in this, to make us happy; and this he declares unto us, that he hath no other design, but to fulfill our joy. O how powerful might this be on our hearts, to conquer them, to make them willingly hearken to him? Any message that comes from Heaven, should be received with great reverence and respect of mortal men; because it comes from the Cour and Palace of the Great King. But when this is the substance of it, to make us happy in himself, to advance us to this incomparable dignity of society with himself, in which society there is a
fulnesse

fulnesse of joy ; then how should we receive it with open hearts, and intertain it gladly ? If we could take it alwayes thus , as a message from Heaven, and look upon it, and hear it in that notion, I think the fruit would be incomparably greater ; for what is it that makes it dead and ineffectual in mens hearts, but that the apprehension of it degenerats and falls down from God to creatures, because it is not taken so as his word, carrying the stamp of his divine authority: We bring it forth, not as a message from him, but as from our selves ; and you receive it not as from him, but from us ; and thus it is adulterated and corrupted on both hands. My beloved, let us joyntly mind this, that whatsoever we have to declare, it is a message from God to mortal men ; and therefore let us so compose our selves in his sight, as if he were speaking to us. The conscience of a very Heathen was awaked, when *Ebud* told him he had a message from God to him : *Eglon arose out of his seat*, that he might hear it reverently, *Judg. 3. 20.* though it was a bloody message, as it proved in the event ; yet so much the common dictates of reason might teach you, that ye should arise, and compose your selves to reverent and awful attention to what the Lord God will speak. But when moreover we know that the sum of the message is, to make us blessed, and raise us up to communion with him in his joy and happinesse ; we are not only called to reverence, as to God,
but

but to ardent affection and desire, as to him who by all means seeks our happineſſe. O how happy were he that could firſt hear, and receive this meſſage from him, and then declare it to others. But however, though we ſhould fail in that, this doth not change either the authority, or nature of the meſſage it ſelf; and therefore, if men ſhould be ſo far deſtitute of God, as not to bring it from him immediatly, yet do not you forſake your own mercy too; but receive it as that which is come forth from God; receive it for it ſelf, as carrying in its boſome a fulneſſe of joy to you; and receive it for his ſake who moved this embaſſage firſt after ſinners, and his ſake who carried it to ſinners, that is, for the *Father, and the Son*; to whose fellowſhip you are here invited. Let us then hear the meſſage:

This then is the meſſage, that God is light, &c. The ground of communion of perſons, is their union in nature, or likeneſſe one to another. There is ſome general ſociety between all mankind, as being conjoyned in one common nature; but the contracting of that in a narrower bounds of affinity and conſanguinity, doth enlarge the affection the more: you ſee it is natural for thoſe who are joyned by ſuch relations of blood one to another, to love one another more then others out of theſe bonds. But true friendſhip draws the circle yet narrower, and contracts the love that is ſcattered abroad to mankind in a ſtrange channel, to run towards one, or a few; and the ſoun-

foundation of this is some peculiar and particular similitude, and likeness in manners, and sympathy of disposition, which makes the souls of men to melt one into another, after some converse and acquaintance together; this is the bond that knits this near society; some conformity necessarily presupposed to communion and fellowship. Now that which holds so in the communion of man with man, must be much more needful in mans communion with God: for all the societies, combinations, and conjunctions of the creatures, are but shadows of this higher communication of the spirit of man, with God *the Father of spirits*. And indeed we may find some rude draughts and resemblances of this divine society, and of the rule according to which it must be modell'd, in all the friendly or near conjunctions of creatures; for every thing is best preserved, and agreeth best with things of its own nature: see the disposition of the parts of the world; things contiguous, and nearest other, are also likest in nature one to another, so it is among men, the several agreements, and symbolizings of mens spirits in different qualities and tempers, makes several sorts of men, and parts them into so many companies: *Pares paribus congregantur, simile simili gaudet.*

Now, my beloved, this same supernatural and divine society that we speak of, must be constituted according to this fundamental rule, that is,

It is necessary, to the end that God and man may have fellowship together, that they come nearer in likeness one to another: now for God, you know he cannot be liker us, for he is unchangeably holy and good: That were most absurd, to bring down his Majesty to partake of our wretched infirmities of sin and darknesse. Indeed in this he hath come as far as his own nature and our good would permit, to communicate in our nature, and all the finless infirmities of it: It is impossible then that he should make up the distance by any change of himself, but we must be changed, and some way raised up to partake of the purity of his nature, and be transformed into some likeness to him, and then is the foundation of society and fellowship laid down: This is the Apostles meaning, in declaring to us what God is, that according to that pattern, and in that glasse, we may see what to conform ourselves to, and may have a particular determination of the great qualification of these who pretend to fellowship with God: *God is light, and in him is no darknesse.* Now take the just opposition, man is darknesse, and in him is no light. Now what communion then can light have with darknesse? either the light must become darknesse, or the darknesse become light; either the light must leave its glorious purity, and forsake its nature, which cannot be admitted, or else the darknesse of mens souls must be wiped off, and abolished by

by the brightnesse of Gods light ; and then there may be a communion between the primitive light, and the derivative light, between the original light, and that which flows out from the original. But take darknesse, remaining darknesse, and light, remaining light, and they cannot compe together ; for the first great separation that was made in the world, was between light and darknesse : *And God saw that light was good, and God divided between the light and the darkness,* Gen. 1. 4. And so it is impossible for men that live in the darknesse of their minds, in ignorance, and in the darknesse of sinfull lusts, that they can have any fellowship with God, who is a fountain of pure light, and undefiled sanctity. *What hast thou to do to take my Covenant in thy mouth,* &c. and this God saith to the wicked: It is an incongruous and unsuitable thing, for men to pretend nearnesse and interest in this God, and yet be buried in darknesse and hatred of the light of personal reformation, as a Gold Ring in a Swines nose, that rather deforms the Jewel, then beautifies the Beast : So are the pretensions of ignorant and wicked men, to this divine society, &c.

SERMON X.

1 Joh. 1. 5. *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, &c,*

WHO is a fit messenger to declare this message? Can darknesse comprehend the light, or apprehend it? Or can those that are blind, form any lively notion of light, to the instruction and perswasion of others? Truly, no more can we conceive or speak of God, who is that pure light, then a blind man can discourse on colours, or a deaf man on sounds; *Who is blind as the Lords servant?* And therefore, who are more unmeet to declare this message of light? What reverence and godly fear ought this to be declared withal, when mortal man speaks of the eternal God unto mortal men? What composure of spirit should be in us? What trembling and adoration? For at our best we can but declare our own ignorance, and the furthest attainment in this knowledge, is but a further discovery of mans darknesse; we have three wayes of creeping towards that glorious light of God, first, his own works are like some visible appearances of that invisible and incomprehensible God; and in these we know him, but not what he is in himself. Consider how dark and dull we are in piercing into the hidden na-
tures

tures of things, even below us, as Beasts and Plants: we behold some effects flow from them, but from what principle these do flow, that we know not: How much lesse can we apprehend any thing suitable of the Divine Majesty, that is infinitely above us, from these wonderful and glorious works of his power and wisdom. Man is indowed with wisdom, to do some excellent works of Art, as Planting, Grafting, Building, Painting, Weaving, and such like. But the Beasts that are below us, cannot apprehend from these works what the nature of man is. Now is there not a more infinite distance, a greater disproportion between us and the Divine Nature, so that we cannot rise up to an understanding notion of it, in it self. Nay, besides, one man will do many things which another cannot understand, he beholds the Art of it, he sees the matter, but yet he cannot pierce into the mind of the Work-man, and look upon that wisdom and *idea* of his mind: Therefore all that we can conclude from these wonderful works of God, is some silent admiration of him. If these be such, then what must he be? How infinitely distant from them, and transcendent over them? but what he is, these cannot declare, and we cannot apprehend. Then we use to climb up to the knowledge of God, by attributing to him all the perfections, excellencies, and eminencies of the creatures: whatsoever commends them, we apprehend that originally and infinitely in him; and thus we spell out that
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Name that is moſt ſimply one, in many Letters, and Characters, according to our mean capacity, as children when they begin to learn; ſo we alcribe to him wiſdom, goodneſſe, power, juſtice, holineſſe, mercy, truth, &c. All which names being taken from the creatures, and ſo having ſignifications ſuited to our imperfections, they muſt needs come infinitely ſhort of him, and ſo our apprehenſions of them: theſe are ſcattered among the creatures, therefore they cauſe di- verſe conceptions in us; but all theſe are united in him. He is a moſt ſimple, pure being, that eminently and virtually is all things; and properly is none of all.

Another way we have of apprehending him, by way of Negation, denying all the imperfections of the creatures, and removing them an infinite diſtance from him, and truly, though this be an imperfection in knowledge, yet it is the greateſt knowledge we can attain to, to know rather what he is not, then what he is: He is not limited to any place, nor bounded with any mea- ſures and degrees of perfection, as creatures are; therefore we call him *Infinite*: He is not com- prehended within the limits of time, but com- prehends all within himſelf; therefore he is *Eter- nal*: He is not ſubject to changes and alterations, therefore called *Immutable*: He is not com- pounded, as a reſult of diſverſe parts, therefore he is moſt purely *Simple*, and *One*: He is not like theſe things we ſee and hear, that fall under our ſenſes;

senses; therefore we call him a *Spirit*, or a spiritual being. Now in all these weak endeavours of man, to detain and fix his own spirit in the contemplation of God, if he cannot reach the understanding of what God is, yet certainly he will attain this great point of wisdom, not to be ignorant of his own ignorance. And truly, my beloved, this is the thing that I would have us to learn to know, that the admiration of God in silence, is the best expression of him. We would not search into these mysteries, to satisfy our curiosity, but rather compose our hearts to a continual silent wondering before him, where our understandings are confounded, and our minds overwhelmed with the infiniteness of that glory, so that we can see nothing but our own ignorance of all; this should certainly compose all to quiet admiration; for silence and wonder is the proper and natural posture of a soul that is at a stand, and can neither win forward for inaccessible light, nor will retire backward for that it apprehends already.

This then is the message, that God is light. Because we cannot conceive in our poor narrow minds, what God is in himself; therefore he expresseth to us often in similitudes to the creatures, and condescends to our capacity. As he stands in manifold relations to us, so he takes the most familiar Names, that may hold out to our dull senses what we may expect of him: therefore he calleth himself a *Father*, a *King*, a *Husband*, a *Rock*,

a Rock, a Buckler, and strong Tower, a Mountain, and whatsoever else may represent to our hearts that which may strengthen them in believing. But there is no creature so directly attributed to God, as *light*: none used to express his very nature and being, as abstracted from these relations, but this, *God is light*, and Christ takes it to himself, *the light of the world*, and *the life of men*. The truth is, it hath some excellency in it above all other visible creatures, that it may fitly carry some resemblance to him. The Scripture calls *light his garment*, *Psal. 104. 2.* and truly it is a more glorious Rob of Majesty, then all the royall and Imperial Robs and Garments of State, that either Angels or men could contrive. *The light* is, as it were, a visible appearance of the invisible God: He hath covered his invisible nature with this glorious Garment, to make himself in a manner visible to man. Its true, that *light* is, but as it were, a shadow of that inaccessible light, *umbra Dei*. It is the dark shadow of God, who is himself infinitely more beautiful and glorious: But yet, as to us, it hath greater Glory and Majesty in it, then any creature besides. It is the chief of the works of God, without which the world would be without form, and void: it is the very beauty of the Creation, that which gives a lustre and amiableness to all that is in it, without which the pleasantest Paradise would become a Wilderness, and this beautiful structure, and
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adorned Palace of the World, a loathsome Dungeon. Besides the admirable beauty of it, it hath a wonderfull swift conveyance, throughout the whole world, the upper, and lower, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, it is carried from the one end of heaven to the other in a moment, and *who can say by what way the light is parted,* Job 38 24. Moreover it carries alongst with it a beautiful influence, and refreshing heat and warmth, which is the very life and subsistence of all the creatures below. And so, as there is nothing so beautiful, so nothing so universally and highly profitable; and to all this, add that singular property of it, that it is not capable of infection, it is of such absolute purity, that it can communicat it self to the dung-hill, as well as to the Garden, without receiving any mixture from it: In all the impurities it meets withall, it remains unmixed, and untainted, and preserves its own nature intire. Now you may perceive that there is nothing visible that is fitter to resemble the invisible God, then this glorious, beautiful, pure, and universally communicable creature, *Light*.

Hereby you may have shadowed out unto you the nature of God, that he is an all-knowing, intelligent being, as light is the first and principal visible thing; yea, that which gives visibility to all things: and so is in its own nature a manifestation of all things material and bodily,

So God is the first object of the understanding: *primum intelligibile, & primum intelligens*. Nothing so fit an embleme of knowledge, as light, and truly in that respect God is the original light, a pure intellectual light, that hath in himself the perfect *idea* and comprehension of all things; he hath anticipated in himself the knowledge of all, because all things were formed in his infinite understanding, and lay, as it were, first hid in the bowels of his infinite power. Therefore he is a Glob or Mass of light and knowledge, like the Sun, from whom nothing is hid; Hell and destruction are not covered to him, there is no opacity, no darknesse or thicknesse in the creation, that can terminat or bound this light, or hinder his understanding to pierce into it. Now all things by the irradiation of the light become visible, so the participation of this glorious Sun of Righteousnesse, and the shining of his beams into the souls of men, makes them to partake of that heavenly intellectual nature, and reflects a wonderful beauty upon them, which is not in the rest of the world.

Besides, here is represented to us the absolute purity and perfection of Gods Nature; God is light, and in him is no darknesse; Besides the purity of the light of knowledge, there is a purity of the beauty of holinesse, the glorious light of God his vertue, and power, and wisdom, is communicated to all the creatures, there is an uni-

versal extent of his influence towards the good and bad, as the Sun shines on both, and yet there is no spot or stain upon his holiness or righteousness, from all his intermingling with the creatures, the worst and basest creatures. All his works are holy and righteous, even his works in unholy and unrighteous men; he draws no defilement from the basest of the creatures, nor yet from the sinfulness of it: He can be intimately present, and conjoined in working, in virtue and power, in care and providence, with the dirt and mire of the streets, with the beasts of the field, and yet that is no stain upon his honour or credit, as men would suppose it to be; no more then it is a dishonour to the Sun to shine on the dung-hill; in a word, there is no mixture of ignorance, darkness, impurity, or iniquity in him, not the least shadow of change, or turning, not the least seed of imperfection; in regard of him the Moon is not clean, and the Sun is spotted; in respect of his holiness, Angels may be charged with folly.

Then add unto this, to make up the resemblance fuller, the bounty and benignity of his influence upon the world, the flowings forth of his infinit goodness, that enricheth the whole earth; look as the Sun is the greatest and most universal benefactor, his influence and heat is the very renovation of the world, it makes all new, and green, and flourishing; it puts a youth upon the world, and so is the very spring and fountain
of

of life to all sublunary things. How much is that true of the *true light*, of the substantial, of whom this Sun is but a shadow, He is the *life of the world*, and the *light of men*. Every good gift and every perfect donation descends from him, Jam. 1. 17. his influence is more universal to the being, to the moving, to the living of all things. And then *Jesus Christ the Sun of Righteousnesse* is carried about in the Orb of the Gospel, and in his beams there is a healing vertue; these are the refreshment of poor wearied souls that are scorched with the anger of God. There is an admirable heat and warmnesse of love and affection, that this *glorious light* carries embosomed in it, and that is it that pierces into souls, and warms hearts, and quickens dead spirits, and puts a new face upon all again. This is the spring of all the life that is truly spiritual; and it hath as sweet and comfortable effects upon the souls of men, who receive the truth in love, the light in love, that is, the light with heat, as ever the Sun approaching near the earth, hath had upon plants and living creatures.

And to compleat the resemblance more, there may be something of the infallibility, and incomprehensibility of the Divine Majesty here represented; for though nothing be clearer then the light, yet there is nothing in its own nature darker then light: That which is so manifest to the eyes, How obscure is it to the understanding.

Many debates and inquiries have been about it, but yet it is not known what that is, by which we know all things. Certainly, such is the *Divine Light*: It is inconceivable, and inexpressible, therefore he is said to dwell in light inaccessible, and full of glory, 1 Tim. 6. 16. There is a twofold darknesse that hinders us to see God, a darknesse of ignorance in us, and a darknesse of inaccessible light in him: the one is a vail upon our hearts, which blinds and darkens the souls of men, that they do not see that which is manifest of God, even in his works. O that cloud of unbelief that is spread over our souls, which hinders the glorious rayes of that *Divine Light* to shine into them. This darknesse Satan contributes much to, who is the *Prince of darknesse*, 2 Cor. 4. 4. this makes the most part of souls like dungeons within, when the glorious light of the Gospel surrounds them without: this earthlinesse and carnality of our hearts, makes them like the earth, receive only the light in the upper and outward superficie, and not suffer it to be transmitted into our hearts, to change them. But when it pleaseth him, who at the first, by a word of power, commanded light to shine out of darknesse, he can scatter that cloud of ignorance, and draw away the vail of unbelief, and can by his power and art so transform the soul, as to remove its earthly quality, and make it transparent and pure, and then the light will shine in to the heart, and get free access into the soul. But though

ough this darknesse were wholly removed, there is another darknesse, that ariseth not from the want of light; but from the excessive superabundance of light; *Caligo lucis nimia*; that is, a divine darknesse; a darknesse of glory; such an infinite excelsse and *superplus* of light and glory, above all created capacities, that it dazzles and confounds all mortal or created understandings. We see some shadows of this, if we look up to the clear Sun; we are able to see nothing for too much light; there is such an infinite disproportion here between the eye of our mind, and this divine light of glory, that if we curiously pry into it, it is rather confounding and astonishing; and therefore it fills the souls of Saints with continual silent admiration and adoration.

SERMON XI.

1 Joh. 1:5. *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darknesse at all.*

T RUE Religion consists not only in the knowledge of God, but especially in conformity to him, and communion with him. Communion and fellowship with God is the great end and design of the Gospel, and it is the great result

of all a Christians pains and progresse; it is not only the greatest part of Religion, but the very reward of Religion too; for piety hath its reward of happiness in the bosome of it, without borrowing from external things. Now that which this sweet and fragrant fruit which perfumes all the soul with delight, and fills it with joy, springs out of, is, *Conformity to God*, a simulation of nature and disposition; some likeness to God imprinted on the soul again in holy affections and dispositions, a co-incidency of our will with the will of God, a drowning of it in the sea of his good pleasure, his Law, in the inward parts. Now what is the root of this conformity, but the knowledge of God? this is that which hath a vertue to transform the soul into his similitude: You see then where true Religion begins lowest, and by what means it grows up to the sweet fruit of that eternal joy: that shall be pressed out of the Grapes of fellowship with God: so then whatsoever is declared of God unto us in his Word, whatsoever is holden forth of him, it is not only set forth to be the subject of our knowledge, but especially to be a pattern for imitation, and to be an inflaming motive to our affection; This is the very substance of the verse.

This then is the message, I declare that God is light, and this I heard not from Christ only for the satisfaction of my curiosity, nor do I declare it to you only, that you may know it, as if you had

had no more to do with it; but especially that ye may know what ye ought to be in conformity to that light; the end of your knowing God, is to become liker God, if so be ye would have communion with him.

Let us take this rule then, to measure all our searchings after God, and inquiries into him; certainly there ought to be more meditation, and inquiry of heart upon this subject, because it is the spring of all life to the soul; it is that which ensheth it most, and fills it with peace, joy, and delight, and brings in a treasure into a mans heart, such as Christ speaks of; *A good man out of the good treasure of his heart, &c.* Meditation, much meditation on God, a stayedness and fixedness of spirit upon him, layes up a treasure in the heart; this is it that makes such a difference between the heart and mouth of a righteous man, and a wicked man; the heart of the wicked is little worth, for the total want of this; and therefore their lips and tongues are void of edification, full of corruption. But where this spring floweth within, it maketh the mouth of a man like a well of life; it maketh his lips like choise silver. O, the scantnesse and neglect of this amongst Christians, makes all to wither and decay: there is little searching after the Almighty, little imploying and intertraining our spirits about him; low, slender, and single thoughts and apprehensions of him, which cannot but cause a deliquium, and decay in all the parts of

of Christianity, when the very Sun is eclipsed from us by our ignorance, and inconsideration of him: and that so long, it must have dreadful effects upon us. Therefore let us be exhorted to this study, to give our spirits to this employment, to think more on God. But as I was saying, there is need of a rule to measure us in it, and of some caution about it, that is, that we have our end rightly established, what we aim at in enquiring after, or meditating upon God. If it be only to give intertainment to the curiosity of our minds, as in the contemplation of natural things, if it be only to pry into secrets and mysteries, and to labour to comprehend that which is incomprehensible, then we lose our labour, and we are in danger to meet with a consuming fire, instead of instructing and refreshing light. I would therefore have this guarded against, the insatiable desire and greediness of our minds after the knowledge of secret mysteries. We must set bounds here, and not overstretch or strain our understandings, to compass his infinit being, as it is in-itself: let us rather take him up as he is revealed in the Scriptures, and so meditate on him as manifested in his Word and Works, his Grace, Mercy, Power, Wisdom, &c. and read his name with delight in these large volumes spread before our eyes, &c.

Now the just measuring and regulating of all knowledge of God, is to direct it to a further end, to have nothing before us but this, that we may

may reverence, adore, and love him so much the more: and this is the thing that maketh access to him most easie and sweet, when the design a soul hath, in all its searchings about him, is for this purpose, to the end it may love him, and worship him more suitably, and be more conformed to him, when he is looked upon as a pattern of our conformity, that is the right apprehension and up-taking of him, to know that *God is light*, and so to know it, as in it to behold the necessity of what qualification should be in us, that is indeed to know God. My beloved, let us consider that to much we know of God, as we love him, and fear him, and are conformed unto him: for that knowledge which is not about this work and design; it is for no other purpose, but to be a witness against a man, and the most haigous aggravation of his sins.

To come then to the particular in hand, *God is light*, and that is holden out and declared for this end, that there may be a pattern of the qualification of all that intend to enter into that society: if ye would have fellowship with God, then consider what you ingage into, what manner of person he is, for the intimat knowledge of one another, is presupposed to all constant friendship: You must know then what God is, if ye would have communion with him, because there is no communion without some conformity, and no conformity without knowledge of him. Therefore as he is light, so the soul must

must be made light in him, and enlightned by him, that would have his society: we must be transformed into that nature, and made children of light, who were children of darknesse. Now as there is a light of understanding, and wisdom in God, and a light of holinesse and purity, so there is in our souls opposite to these, a darknesse of ignorance and unbelief, and a darknesse of sin, and impurity of affections. Now *what communion can light have with darknesse?* Let every man ask this at his own heart, if there be no happinesse without this society, and no possibility of this society, while I remain in darknesse, then is it not high time to come to the light. This then is the first change that is made in a soul, the darknesse of ignorance and unbelief is driven out, by the approach of that glorious light of the Gospel into the heart, then is discovered unto the soul that deformity of sin, that loathsomnesse in it self, that it never apprehended: then there is a manifestation of the hidden works of darknesse, of the desperat wickednesse of the heart, which lay un-observed, and unsuspected all the while, and now a man cannot in that view but abhor himself, for that which none else can see in him. And there is withal manifested that glorious holinesse and purity in God, that inviolable righteousness, that omnipotent power, which formerly were never seriously thought upon; now these are represented to the life before a sinner and to close up all, there is a manifestation

ſettation of the grace and goodneſſe of God in Chriſt, which diſcovers a way of ſalvation, and delivery from ſin and wrath; and this perfumeth and reſreſheth all the faculties of the ſoul. Thus the ſoul is in a part conformed to that original light, when a beam is ſent from it, and hath pierced into the heart, and ſcattered the darkneſſe, that did alienat the minds of men from God. But it is not only an illumination of the fore-face, and outer ſide of the ſoul, not only a conviction of the judgment in theſe things, but by vertue of that divine heat that is tranſmitted with the light of the Goſpel, the ſoul is purified and cleaned from its groſſer nature, and ſo is made transparent, that the light may ſhine into the very inwards of the heart; and this is the ſpecial point of conformity to God, to have our ſouls purged from the darkneſſe of ſinful, earthly, and muddy affections, to have them purified by the light of God, from all the works and luſts of darkneſſe, and the ſhining beauty of holy affections and inclinations, to ſucceed and fill up the vacant room. If knowledge only reſide in our brains, and ſend not down warm beams to quicken and inflame the heart, then it is barren and unfruitful, it is cold and unprofitable. If it hover only alone in our heads, and keep a motion there, but ſend down no reſreſhing ſhowres to the affections, which may make us abound in good fruits, then it is like the windy clouds, clouds without rain, that paſſe away without

any benefit to the thirsty ground. Let us then take this alongs with us; let the impression of this description of the Divine Majesty abide on our hearts. *God is light*, and if we often ruminate, and ponder on this, I think it will make us often to reflect upon our selves, how we are *darknesse*, and this will breed some carefullnesse and desire in the soul, how to have this darkness removed, that there may be a soul capable of divine illustration. This is it that advanceth the soul to the nearest conformity with God, the looking often upon God, till our souls be inlightened, and our hearts purified, and this again puts the soul in the nearest capacity for that blessed communion with God. *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God; Mat. 5.8.* Truly, it is not profoundness of ingine, it is not subtlety and sharpnesse of wit, it is not pregnancy in understanding, or eminency in parts, that will dispose the soul to this blessed vision of God, and frame it to a capacity of fellowship with him; no, there needs no extraordinary parts for this, nothing but that the heart be purified from corruptions, those inward earthly qualities, that are like so many vitious and grosse humours, filling the organ of the sight, these, pride, conceit, self-love, passion, anger, malice, envy, strife, covetousnesse, love of pleasures, ambition, these, I say, that possesse the hearts of the most excellent natural spirits, casts a mist upon

Verſ. 5. *the 1. Epistle of John.* **THE**

upon their eyes, and opens them to ſee God, or enjoy that delight in him, that ſome poor, weak, and ignorant creatures, whole hearts the Lord hath purged from ſin, do find in God. Therefore, if any of you have an aim at this, to have fellowſhip with God, know both for your direction, and your encouragement, that *God is Light*: for your direction, becauſe that muſt be your pattern, and if you have no ſtudy that way, to be like him in holineſſe, you ſhall not ſee him. But take it likewise for an encouragement, for that ſtile carries not only the neceſſity of what he muſt be, but it holds out likewise the fountain and ſtore-houſe of all our qualifications, for *God is light*, the original, primitive light, all muſt borrow of him, and that light is freely and impartially communicable to poor ſinners: *With thee is the fountain of life, and in thy light ſhall we ſee light.* Let a ſoul that apprehends its own darkneſſe and diſtance from him, thus encourage it ſelf, my light is but a beam derived from his light, and there is no want in him: He is a *Sun of righteouſneſſe*, if I ſhut not up my heart through unwillingneſſe and unbelief, if I deſire not to keep my ſins, but would be purged from them, then that glorious light may ſhine without ſtop and impediment in to my heart: He is not only light in his own nature, but he is a light to us, and if he pleaſe to remove that which is interpoſed between him and us, it ſhall be

be day-light in our hearts again. Thus a soul may strengthen it self to wait on him, and by looking thus up to him, and fixing on him, we shall be enlightened, and our faces not be ashamed.

SERMON XII.

1 Joh. 1. 6. *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darknesse, we lie, &c.*

THERE is nothing in which men suffers themselves to be so easily deceived, as in this highest concernment of Religion, in which the eternal interest of their souls lyes: there is no delusion either so grosse, or so universal, in any other thing, as in this thing, in regard of which, all other things are nothing. This hath overspread the world, (to speak only of that part which pretends to Christianity) a strong, pertinacious, and blind fancy of being in Jesus Christ, and having interest in salvation. I call it a blind and ignorant fancy, for truly ignorance and darknesse is the strongest foundation of such conceits: *Papists* call it *the mother of devotion*, it is true, in this sense it is the mother of a mans groundless devotion towards himself, that is, of delusion: this, together with self-love, which always hood-winks the mind, and will not suffer a serious impartial

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examination of a mans self, these I say, are the bottom of this vain perswasion, that possesseth the generality of men. Now what it wants of knowledge, it hath of wilfulness, it is a conceit altogether void of reason, but it is so wilfull, and pertinacious, that it is almost utterly convincible, and so it puts souls in the most desperat forlorn estate that can be imagined, it makes them, as the Apostle speaks, *Ephes. 5. 6.* *children of imperwasion*, it is rendered commonly *children of disobedience*, and indeed they are joyned together, they are children of disobedience, carrying the manifest characters of wrath upon them; yet they are wilfully children of imperwasion, incapable of any perswasion contrary to these deluding insinuations of their own minds, though they be manifest to all men to be sons of disobedience, living in rebellion against God, yet it is not possible to perswade them of it; they are as far from conviction of what they are, as reformation to what they should be. (Notwithstanding if men would but give an impartial and attentive ear to what the Apostle sayes here, I suppose the very frame of his argument is so convincing, that it could not but leave some impression: If any thing will convince a child of imperwasion, the terms here propounded are fittest, *God is light, and in him is no darkness.* Hence it follows by inavoidable consequence, as clear as the light, that no man can have fellowship with God, that walks in darkness.

Those that delude themselves in this matter, are of two kinds, the generality pretend to Christianity in general, and to an interest in salvation, but if we descend into the chief parts and members of Christianity, as holiness, fellowship with God, walking after the Spirit, and such like, these they do not so much as pretend to, and withal, think they have a dispensation from such strictness, and make it a sufficient plea that they are not such, because they never professed to be such: others again, though fewer, can pretend even to these higher points of Christianity, as communion with God, walking after the Spirit, and indeed in this they are more consonant to their profession of Christianity: But, as the Apostle saith, there may be a practical lie in it too, if we consider and compare their practice with their profession.

I would speak a word by way of preparation to you who are of the first sort, that is the very multitude of professing Christians, because you do not profess so much as others, and do not give out your selves for the students of holiness, you think your selves exempted from the stroke of all this soul-piercing Doctrine, you think readily, it is not pertinent to apply this to you, of walking contrary to profession, and so committing this gross lie, in not doing the truth. If any say I have fellowship with God, &c. And who will say that? say ye, Who will speak such a high word of himself as this? Therefore since you do

not presume so high, you think you have escaped the censure that follows.

But I beseech you, consider what your professions import, and what you engage your selves to, even by the general profession of Christianity: I know you will all say you are Christians, and hope to be saved. Now do ye understand what is included in that, if any man say, that he is a Christian, he really sayes that he hath fellowship with God; if any man say, he is a Christian, he sayes he hath fellowship with Christ, and is partaker of his Spirit; for as the Apostle, Rom. 8. 9. declares unto you, *If any have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his*; that is, he is no Christian. For what is it, I pray you, to be a Christian? Is it not to be a new creature, formed again by the Spirit of Christ? 2 Cor. 5. 17. Therefore in as far as you pretend to be Christians, and yet are not professors of holinesse, and think you have a dispensation from such a walking in God, and after Christ, you fall under a twofold contradiction, and commit a two-fold lie: First, between your profession and practice; then in your profession it self: your practice is directly cross to the very general profession of Christianity. But besides that, there is a contradiction in the bosome of your profession; you affirm you are Christians, and yet refuse the profession of holinesse; you say ye hope for Heaven, and yet do not so much as pretend to godlinesse, and walking spiritually. Nay, these you disjoyn in

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your profession, which are really one, without which the name of Christianity is an empty, vain, and ridiculous appellation. There must be then a great darknesse of misapprehension in your minds, that you take on the name of Christians, and will not know what it imports, and therefore in the mean time, you professe that which destroyes and annuls your former profession. Now certainly, this is a grosser lie, a flatter contradiction, then it needs much inquiry into, to find it out. It is so palpable, that I wonder that these very common and received principles of truth, do not rise up within, to testifie against it: For if ye do not own the profession of holinesse and communion with God, what advantage have you then of Christianity? tell me, What will it serve you for? Can it save you? Can a bare, empty, contradicted, and blasphemed title save you? and if it do not save you, it will make your condemnation the greater. Let this then first be settled in our hearts, and laid down as a principle, that the most general profession of Christianity layes an inviolable bond and obligation upon us, to all that is imported in the particular expressions of a Christians nature, walk, and society; whether we take it so or not, thus it is: to be a Christian infolds all that can be said; and if it do not import these, it is not true to its own signification, nor conformed to Christs meaning. You may deprave the world, as you please, and deform that holy calling so,

as it may suit to your carriage, but according to this word, in this acceptance of it, you shall be judged: and if your Judge shall in that great day lay all this great charge upon you, what will it avail you now to absolve your selves in your imaginations, even from the very obligation it self.

Let us suppose then, that you are convicted of this, that Christianity in the most general and common acceptance, is inclusive of fellowship and communion with God; and that you profess and pretend to both; then let us apply this just rule of the Apostles, to examine the truth and reality of such a profession. The rule is straight, and so may be a trial both of that which is straight and crooked. *Rectum sui & obliqui index*: and here the application being made, there is a discovery of the falshood and crookednesse of most mens hearts; this Golden Rule of Examination, is a Rule of Proportion, so to speak, or it is founded upon the harmony that should be between profession and practice, words and deeds, and upon that, conformity should interceed between those that have communion one with another. Now apply these to the generality of Christians, and behold, there is no harmony and consent between their speaking and walking; their calling and profession, as Christians, imports communion with God, who is the pure *unmixt light*, and yet they declare otherwise, that themselves are in darknesse of ignorance,

ignorance, and walk in the darknesse of sin, and so that communion must be pretended, where there is no conformity and likenesse to God intended: The result then of all is this, herein is the greatest lie, and most dangerous withal, committed, It is the greatest lie, because it takes in all a mans conversation, which all along makes up one great universal lie, a lie composed of infinit contraries, of innumerable particular lies, for every step, every word, and action, is in its own nature contrary to that holy profession, but all combined together, makes up a black constellation of lies; one powerful lie against the truth. And besides, it is not against a particular truth, but against the whole complex of Christianity. An error is a lie against such a particular truth as it opposeth; but the tract and course of an ignorant, ungodly conversation, is one continued lie, against the whole bulk and body of Christianity. It is a lie drawn the length of many weeks, moneths, and years, against the whole frame of Christian profession: for there is nothing in the calling of a Christian, that is not retracted, contradicted, and reproached by it. Oh, that ye could unbowel your own wayes, and see what a cluster of lies and incongruities is in them, what reproaches and calumnies these practical lies cast upon the honour of your Christian Calling, how they tend of their own nature, to the disgracing of the truth, and the blaspheming of Gods Name. These things

ye would find, if ye would rip up your own hearts and wayes, and if you found how great that lie is, you could not but fear the danger of it, for it being no leſſe then a denying of Jeſus Chriſt, and a real abrenunciation of him, it puts you without the refuge of ſinners, and is moſt likely to keep you without the bleſſed City, for there ſhall in no wayes enter therein any thing that defileth; or maketh a lie, Rev. 21. 27. What ſhall then become of them whoſe life all alongs is but one continued lie,

SERMON XIII.

1 Joh. 1. 6. If we ſay that we have fellowſhip with him, and walk in darkneſſe, we lie, &c.

THAT which is the ſum of Religion, ſincerity, and a correſpondency between profeſſion and practice, that is confirmed by reaſon, and much ſtrengthened by nature it ſelf, ſo that Religion, Reaſon, and Nature, conſpire in one, to hold out the beauty and comlineſſe of ſincerity, and to put a note and character of infamy and deformity upon all hypocrifie and deceit, eſpecially in the matters of Religion. There is nothing ſo contrary to Religion, as a falſe appearance,

ance, a shew of that which is not; for Religion is a most intire and equable thing, like it self, harmonious in all the parts of it, the same within and without, in expression and action, all correspondent together. Now to marre this harmony, and to make it up of unequal, dissimilar parts, and to make one part give the lie to the other, the course of a mans life, in ignorance, negligence, and sin, proclaiming contrary to the profession of Christianity: this is to make Religion a monstrous thing, to deny the nature of it, and in our imaginations to contrive an impossible union of inconsistent things. It is a creature made up of contradictions, which can have no subsistence in the truth, but only in the fancies of deluded souls; one professing Christianity, and so by consequence fellowship with the *original light, the Sun of Righteousnesse*, and yet darknesse of ignorance possessing the mind, and the heart carried away in the wayes of the lusts of ignorance, and walking in that darknesse, this is a monster in Christianity, one so far misshapen, that the very outward form and visage of it doth not remain. But I told you, reason confirms this, for what more suitable to the very natural frame and constitution of a reasonable being, then that the outward man should be the image and expression of the inward, and that they should answer one another, as face answers face in the water; that the tongue should be the interpreter of the mind, and the actions of a mans life the

the interpreter of his tongue. Here is that beautiful proportion, and that pleasing harmony, when all these, though different in their own nature, yet conjoyn together, and make up one sweet concord. Now truly, if we take upon us the pretension of Christianity, and yet our ordinary and habitual speeches are carnal and earthly, never salted with grace, often poisoned with blasphemies, oaths and cursings, and often defiled with filthy speeches, and often intermingled with reproaches of others, if our conversation be conformed to the course of the world, according to these lusts that hurry away multitudes of mankind to perdition, and look to the heart within, and behold, never any labour about the purifying of it from corruption, never any mortification of evil affections, and little or no knowledge of the truth, not so much as may let Christ in to the soul: this, I say, is as unreasonable and absurd, as it is irreligious: it wholly perverts that beautiful order, makes an irreconcilable discord between all the parts in man, that neither mind, nor mouth, nor hands answer one another, nor all of them; or any of them answer that holy calling a man pretends to. Such a one pretends ordinarily the goodnesse of his heart towards God, but now the tongue cannot interpret the heart, it is exautorated out of that natural office, for the ordinary current is contrary to that pretended goodnesse of the heart: For a good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, sendeth

sendeth forth good things, but all these are either evil, or never seasoned with that spiritual goodness. Then the wayes and actions of a mans life, which ought to interpret and expound his professions, these are rendered altogether incapable of that, they give no confirmation to them, but rather a manifest contradiction; for what are your multiplied oaths, drunkennesses, fornications, railings, contentions, lyings, Sabbath-profanations? your woful neglect of prayer in secret, and in your families, your continuing in these evils that ever you walked into, what are they, I say, but a manifest violation of both Religion and Reason, and a clear confirmation that *ye are liars, and the truth is not in you?*

There is something even in nature to declare the absurdity and unnaturalness of this general discordance between mens profession and practice. Look upon all the creatures, and do they not all with one voice proclaim sincerity? Hath not every beast, and every bird its own outward shape, outward gesture, and voice, and external workings, which declare the inward nature of it? And is not this a Staple-known rule in nature, that every thing is known by the effects of it? A Lion by his roaring, a Lark by its singing, a Horse by his neighing, and an Ox by his lowing, &c. All these speak forth nothing but sincerity, in so much, that if these marks and signs should be confounded, and beasts use them indifferently, all humane knowledge should suddenly fall to nothing,

thing, this would put such a confusion, both in the world and mankind. O, how doth this condemn those who pretend to this high Calling of Christianity? and yet there is no way left to discern them by, nothing appearing in them, and ordinarily proceeding from them, which may give a signification of the inward truth of their fellowship with God; but rather that which gives a demonstration of the vanity of the pretention. There were no consent in nature, if that were not; neither is there any harmonious agreement in Religion, where this proportion and correspondence is not kept in a mans life. The very Heathens did not account them Philosophers, but those that expressed their Doctrines in works, as well as words; and truly, the liveliest image of truth is in practice: They commended them that were sparing in words, and abundant in deeds: who had short speeches, but long and large discourses in their life; and what is this, but that which our Saviour every where, from his own example, inculcates upon us. These words are emphatick, *To do the truth, to walk in the light, to do his word, to believe with the heart,* and such like: all which declare, that in so far we have the truth, and have fellowship with the light, as it is impressed in the affection, and expressed again in the conversation; for the *infinite truth*, and the *infinite life*, is one, and the *original light*, and *primitive life and love*, is one too, and whoever truly receives the truth and light,

as it is, cannot but receive him, as the *living arnab*, and *life-giving light*, and so be heated and warmed inwardly by his beams, which will certainly cause some stirring and working without: For as much as in nature, heat is alwayes working, so is the fire of love kindled in the heart, incessant that way, *faith working by love*, for action is the very life of life, that which both shews it, and preserves it.

Now what shal we say, to carry these things home to your hearts? Where shall convincing words be had which may break the hardnells of your hearts? It is strange that you are in such a deep dream of delusion, that nothing can awake you out of it? And how little is it that you have to please your selves into? Some external priviledges, *the Temple of the Lord, his Covenant, and the seals of it, your ordinary bearing the Word*, and such like: But are there not many things in your hearts and wayes, that act the most contradictory lie to these that can be? For wherefore do we thus meet together? Do ye know an end, or propose any? I scarce believe it of the most part. We come out of custome, and many as by constraint, and with little or no previous consideration of the great end of this work; and when ye go forth, what fruit appears? Your ordinary, carnal, and civil discourses succeed; and who is it either bows his knee to pray for the divine blessing, or intertains that holy word either in his own meditation, or speaks of it to the edification of others? Are you not, the most part of you, that ground of which

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Christ speaks, *that lyes in the way-side*, and every thing comes and takes the seed up? Do ye either listen and apply your hearts to a presentnesse in hearing? Or is there any more account of it, then a sound in the ear, or any footstep or impression left in the heart, more then of the flight of a bird in the air? And alas! how many souls are choaked and stifled? the truth suffocated in the very springing, by the thorns of the cares of this world, and the throng and importunity of businesses, and earthly desires. How many good motions come to no maturity by this means? How few of you use to pray in secret, and to dedicate a time for retirement from the world, and injoyment of God? Nay, you think you are not called to it, and if any be induced to it, and to publick worship in their families, yet all the day over is but a flat contradiction to that: What earthly-mindednesse? What unholiness of affection? What impurity of conversation? What one lust is subdued? What one sin mortified? Who increaseth more in knowledge of the truth, or in love of God? Is it not midnight with most part of you? O the darknesse of the ignorance of your minds, by which you know not that Religion you professe, more then Turks who do persecute it. And what are the wayes ye walk into? Are they not such wayes, as *will not come to the light, and bate the light, because it reproves them?* Joh. 3. 19, 20. and 11. 9, 10. Are they not such, in which

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men stumble, though they seem to walk easily and plainly into them? Yet, O that everlasting stumble that is at the end of them! when you shall fall out of one darknesse of sin and delusion, into an utter, extreame, eternal darknesse of destruction and damnation. O, that fearful dungeon, and pit of darkness, you poss into! Therefore, if you love your own souls, be warned, I beseech you be warned to flee from that utter darknesse, be awaked out of your deceiving dreams, and deluding, self-flattering imaginations, and *Christ shall give you light*. The discovery of that grosse darknesse you walked into, in which you did not see whither you went, I say, the clear discerning of what it is, and whither it leads, is the first opening of that *Light*, the first visit of that *Morning Star*, that brings salvation.

If ye will not be convinced of that infinite danger you are into, yet ye are not the further from it. *He that walketh in darknesse lieth*, &c. His strong confidence and perswasion hath a lie, a contradiction in the bosome of it, and that will never bottom any true happinesse. It is a lie offered by the hand, the foot, and all the members: a lie against the holy truth and Word of God, and the very reproach of the Name of Christ; a lie against your selves, and your own professions; a soul-murthering lie, as well as a Christ-denying lie: and this lie (as a holy man saith) hath filled Houses, Cities, Families, Countreys, it hath even overspread the whole Nation, and filled all with darknesse,

darknesse, horreur, confusion, trouble and anguish; once being a holy Nation by profession of a Covenant with God, and our open, manifest, universal retraction of that, by an unholy, ungodly, and wicked conversation. This hath brought the sword against a hypocritical Nation, and this will bring that far greater, incomparably more intolerable day of wrath upon the children of disobedience. Therefore let me exhort all of you, in the Name of the Lord, as ye desire to be admitted to that eternally blessed society, within the holy City, and not to be excluded among these, *who commit abomination, and make a lie,* that ye would henceforth impose this necessity upon your selves, or know that it is laid upon you by God, to labour to know the will and truth of God, that you may see that light that shines in the Gospel, and not only to receive it in your minds, but in your hearts by love, that so you may endeavour in all sincerity, the doing of that truth, the conscionable practising of what you know. And this, as it is a great point of conformity to the light, so it will make you capable of more light from God; for he delights to shew his liberality where he hath any acceptance. Be not satisfied, O! be not satisfied with knowing these truths, and discoursing upon them, but make them further your own, by impressing them deeply in your hearts, and expressing them plainly in your wayes. *This is pure Religion and undefiled, Jam. 1. 27. And is not this*

this to know me, saith the Lord, Jer. 22. 16. *Prudence is real knowledge, because it is living knowledge, it is the very life and soul of Christianity, when there needs no more but the intimation of his will to carry the whole man: This is that we would all aspire unto, and not satisfy our selves in our poor attainments below this.*

SERMON XIV.

1 Joh. 1. 7. But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

ARE is the imitation of Nature, and true Religion is a divine Art, that consists in the imitation of God himself, the Author of Nature. Therefore it is a more high and transcendent thing, of a sublimer nature, then all the Arts and Sciences among men; those reach but to some resemblance of the wisdom of God, expressed in his works, but this aspires to an imitation of himself in holiness, which is the glory of his Name, and so to a fellowship with himself. Therefore there is nothing hath so high a pattern, or sublime an end, God himself, who is infinitely

ſurely above all, is the pattern, & loſtery wiſh God, is the end of it; and ſo it cannot choiſe, but where Religion makes an ſolid impreſſion on a ſoul, it muſt exceedingly raiſe and advance it to the moſt heroic and noble reſolutions that it is capable of; in reſpect of which elevation of the ſoul after God, the higheſt project, the greateſt aſpirings, and the moſt elevating deſigns of men, are nothing but low, baſe, and wretched, having nothing of true greatneſſe of mind in them, but running in an earthly and ſordid channel, infinitely below the pooreſt ſoul, that is liſted up to God.

Since we have then ſo high a pattern as God, becauſe he is infinitely removed from us in his own nature, we have him expreſſed to us under the name and notion of *light*, which makes all things manifeſt. — Not only as dwelling in *inacceſſible light*, that is, in his own incomprehenſible, ineffable eſſence, even before this light was created, for *he is in the light, and was in the light*, when there was no Sun to give light, becauſe he was in himſelf invironed (ſo to ſpeak) with the infinit light and ſplendor of his own understanding, and beauty of his own holineſſe, and ſo dwelling in an *all-fulneſſe*, and *ſelf-ſufficiency* of bleſſedneſſe. Not only is he thus in the *light*, but he is a *light* to poor ſinners, the moſt communicative being, that ceaſeth not continually to ſend forth ſteamings of that light and life into dark and dead ſouls: and therefore he is not

only light in himself, but a Sun of Righteousness, most beneficial in his influences, most impartial and free in his illumination, and so he is often called, *my light, and my salvation, our light, a light to me*, *Psal. 27. 1. Micah 7. 8. Iſai. 42. 6, 7.* Now, it is this emission of light from him, that first drives away that gross darknesse that is over souls, for till then, in the darkness all was hid and covered, nothing seen, neither our selves, nor God, neither the temper of our hearts, nor the course of our wayes, nor the end they lead to. But it is the breaking in of a beam of that *Sun of Righteousness*, that maketh any such discovery; as moles are not seen till the Sun shine, though the house be full of them; in darknesse there is nothing but confusion and disorder; and light only makes that disorder visible to the soul, to the affecting of the heart. Now when once the soul hath received that light, there is a desire kindled in the heart after more of it, as when the eye hath once perceived the sweetness and pleasantnesse of the light, it opens it self, and exposeth it self to a fuller reception of more: and so the soul that is once thus happily prevented by the first salutation, and visit of that day-spring from on high, while he was sitting in darknesse, and in the shadow of death, *Luk. 1. 78, 79.* afterward, follows after that light, and desires nothing more, then to be imbosomed with it: That tender preventing mercy, so draws the heart after it, that it can never be at perfect rest,

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till the night be wholly ſpent, and all the ſhadows of it removed, and the Sun clearly up above the Horizon, and that is the day of that clear viſion of *Gods face*. But in the mean time, this is the great ambition and indeavour of ſuch an one, to walk in that light, and this is the very intertainment of that ſellowſhip with God; he is already in the light, that is to ſay, he is tranſlated from a ſtate of darkneſſe to light, and indowed with the living and ſaving knowledge of *God in Jeſus Chriſt*, this is his ſtate; he is in the light, one inlightned from above, having his eyes opened to diſcover the myſtery of the iniquity of his own heart, and to ſee far off, to that bottomleſſe pit of miſery, which his way would lead him to; one who hath by this divine illuſtration diſcovered eternal things, and *ſeen things not ſeen*, and withall gotten ſome knowledge of ſalvation, by the remiſſion of ſins. Now ſuch an one, being thus in the light. his duty is, and his infinite dignity beſides, to walk in that light, that is, to lead all his life under that eternal light of *God*, which ſhines in the Word, and to bring it all forth in his view; to make our whole courſe a progreſſive motion towards Heaven; wherein that *glorious light* ſhines moſt gloriouſly. It is almoſt all one with that of *Pauls*, to have our converſation in Heaven; for, to walk in the light, it is a kind of elevation of our actions, a raiſing them up to Heaven, to that pure light, for after that, and toward that, is the ſouls deſign.

Now to expresse to you in what it consists, I desire not to branch it forth in many particulars, which rather distract the mind, then affect the heart; only you may know, it consists especially into the inward retirements of the soul to God, and the outward shining of that light, in our conversation to others. These are the chief parts of it, borrowing from his light, and then lending and imparting it to others, by a holy conversation. Truly, we must needs conceive that the most lively and unmixt partaking of the *light of God*, and the sweetest society with him, is in the secret withdrawings of the soul from the world, and reposes upon God, those little intervals, and, as it were, stoll hours of fellowship with God, that are taken from the multitude and throng of our businesse; these are the fittest opportunities of the transforming the soul into his similitude, and of *purifying it as he is pure*, of filling it with divine light and love; for then the heart lyes, as it were, perpendicularly under his beams, and is opened before him, to give admission and entry to this saving, transforming light; and it is the shining of Gods countenance then upon the soul, that draws it most towards conformity with him, and leaves an impression of light and love upon the soul. Oh, that you were more acquainted with this, this application, so to speak, that is, sunning your selves, and warming in the Sun, the exposing and opening of your hearts frequently in secret, before this *Sun of Righteousnesse*.

Righteousnesse. Now, this, if you were acquaint with it, would make your light so to shine before men, as your Heavenly Father may be glorified, Mat. 5. 16. and that is the walking in that light of God. This makes a Christian to come forth, as Moses from the Mount, with his face shining; he comes out from the retired access to God, with a lustre upon his carriage, that may beautifie the Gospel; and (as one saith well) with the Tables of the Law in both his hands, written in his practice; the light of the Law shining in his life; and truly this is the Christians diurnal-motion in his lower sphere, wherein he carries about that light that is derived from the higher light; in all his converse with men, it shines from him to the glorifying of him that is the Father of lights, walking righteously and soberly, without offence, doing good to all, especially the children of light, extending offices of love and benevolence to every one, forbearing and forgiving offences, not partaking with other mens sins, and finally, declaring in word and deed, that we have communion with the fountain of pure light, and one day expect to be translated out of this lower Orb, where we are so far distant from him, and fixed in the highest of all; where we may have the immediat, full, uninterrupted, and clearest aspect of his countenance, which shall then make the description that is here given of God, communicable to us, that, *as he is light, and in him is no darkness*, so we being fully and perfectly

shined upon by him, may be light likewise, without any mixture of darknesse, as here it is not.

Now, my beloved in the Lord, this is that we are called unto, to walk thus in the light, in the light of obedience and sanctification, and that is the great thing ye would learn to aspire unto, rather then to enjoy the light of consolation: Indeed I conceive, that which maketh many of us *walk in darknesse*, as is spoken in *Ih. 50. 12.* that is, without comfort, peace, and joy, and without clear discerning our interest in God, is, because we walk in another darknesse, that is, of sin and distance from God; the one darknesse is introductive of the other, nay, they cannot be long without other, the dark cloud of bold sinning, and carelesse uncircumspect walking, that cannot but eclipse the light of consolation, and fill the soul with some horrour, anguish, and confusion. Therefore, if ye would walk in the light of joy and comfort, O, take heed nothing be interposed between God and your souls: you must likewise walk in the light of his Law, which is, as *a lamp to the feet*, and this light, as the ray, begets that light of comfort, as the splendor, which is the second light of the Sun: I know it is a disconsolat and sad condition to walk without the light of the knowledge of our interest in God; but I would earnestly recommend unto you two things to support you, and help you in that; one is, that you do not give over the chief point of this society with God, that is, walking in

in the light of his Law and Commandments, but that you do the more seriously addresse to the one, that you want the other. Certainly, it ought to be no hinderance of your obedience, and patient continuing in obedience, that you know not your own interest, and that his countenance shines not so upon you; you know that sweet resolution, *I will wait upon the Lord who hides his face*, &c. *Isai. 8. 17. Mic. 7. 7.* and his own command, *Isai. 50. 10. Hos. 12. 6. Ye that walk in such a darknesse, nevertheless, stay upon God.* Truly there could be no greater evidence of thy interest, then this, to give patient attendance upon him in the wayes of obedience, till he shine forth; this would in due time bring forth thy righteousness as the light, if we would not substract and withdraw our selves from under the light, because it is presently overclouded. Then, moreover you would know, that all this while that your interest in Christ lyes dark, and under cloud, you should then be most in the application of that blood to your soules, most in trusting and staying upon the *Name of God*, and his absolute promises. Suppose thou do not as yet know that he is thine, yet dost thou not know that he is made thine by believing in him? and therefore while it is inevident that it is already, thou ought so much the more to labour, that what is not, may be. Now, if thou canst not apply him to thy soul, as thine own possession, yet thou mayest, and so much the more oughtest

oughtest to apply thy soul to him, and resign and offer thy self to him, as willing to be his possession, to be his, and no more thine own; in a word, when thine own experimental feeling of the work of Gods Spirit fails within thee, then so much the more insist, and dwell upon the meditation and belief of the general promises, which are the proper object of faith, and not of sense: as our own interest is the proper object of sense, and not of faith. Therefore the defect in the one, needs not rebound upon the other. To sum up all in one word, if thou thinkest that thou hast not yet believed in Christ, and hath no interest in him; I will not dispute with thee, to perswade thee that thou art mistaken, for all this debate would be in the dark, because thou art in darkness; but one thing I would say unto thee, labour to do that which thou would do, which thou must do, if such a case were granted; suppose it were so, that thou had no interest in him, what would thou do then? I am sure thou would say, I would labour by any means to have him *mine*; why then, thou knows that cannot be before believing, and receiving him on his promises, and not at all, but by believing. Therefore, since that this is it you must at length turn unto, suppose the case were decided, why do ye not presently rather without more wearying your selves, in the greatnesse of your way, turn in hither, as to a place of refuge, without further disputing in the businesse, and so by believing in Christ, and waiting upon him in his ways, you shall put that out of question, which debating would
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make an endless question: The Lord make you wise to know the things that belongs to your peace.

SERMON XV.

I Joh. 1. 7. — And the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

CAN two walk together except they be agreed? AS darknesse cannot have fellowship with light, till it be changed into some conformity to light, even so there can neither be any fellowship in walking, nor conformity in nature, between God and us, who are enemies to him by nature, unlesse there be some agreement and reconciliation of the difference. Now here is that which maketh the atonement, *The blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin.* This is it that takes away the difference between God and men, and makes reconciliation for us; This blood hath quenched the flame of indignation and wrath kindled in Heaven against us. And this alone can quench and extinguish the flames and furies of a tormented soul, that is burnt up with the apprehension of his anger: All other things thou can apply, or cast upon them, will be as oyl to increase them, whether it be to cool thy self in the shadows of the worlds delights, such a poor shift as the rich glutton would have taken in hell; those drops of cold water that thou can distill out of the creature, will never give any solid ease to thy conscience; thou may abate the fury of it, or put it off for a season, thou

who is afraid of hell and wrath, may procure some short vacancy from those terrours, by turning to the world: but certainly they will recurr again, and break out in a greater fire, like a fever that is not diminished, but increased by much drinking cold water: or if thou go about to refresh thy self, and satisfy thy challenges by thy own attainments in Religion, and by reflection upon thy own heart and wayes, finding something in thy esteem, that may counterballance thy evils, and so give thee some confidence of Gods favour, these, I say, are but deceitful things, and will never either quench the displeasure of God for thy sins, but rather add fuel to it, because thou justifies thy self, which is an abomination before him; nor yet will it totally extinguish and put to silence the clamours of thy conscience, but that some day thou shalt be spoiled of all that self-confidence, and self-defence, and find thy self so much the more displeasing to God, that thou did please thy self, and undertook to pacifie him. Therefore, my beloved, let me above all things recommend this unto you, as the prime foundation of all Religion, upon which all our peace with God, and pardon of sin, and fellowship with God must be built, that the blood of Jesus Christ be applyed unto your consciences by believing, and that first of all, upon the discovery of your enmity with God, and infinit distance from him, you apply your hearts unto this blood, which is the atonement, to the reconciling sacrifice,

crifice, which alone hath vertue and power with God. Do not imagine that any peace can be without this; would ye walk with God, which is a badge of agreement? would ye have fellowship with God, which is a fruit of reconciliation? would ye have pardon of sins, and the particular knowledge of it, which is the greatest effect of favour? and all this, without and before application of *Christ who is our peace, in whom the Father only is well pleased*; will you seek these, and yet dispute this point of believing, as if it were possible to attain these without the sprinkling of that blood on the heart, which indeed cleanseth it from an evil accusing conscience. If you desire to *walk in the light, as he is in the light*, why weary ye your selves in by-ways? Why take ye such a compasse of endlesse and fruitlesse agitation, and perplexity of mind? and will not rather come straight way at it, by the door of *Jesus Christ*, for he is the *new and living way*, into which you must enter, if ye would walk in the light; and the wounds of his side, out of which this blood gushed, these open you a way of access to him, because he was pierced for us. That stream of blood, if ye come to it, and follow it all along, it will certainly carry you to the Sea of light and love, where you may have fellowship with God. And O, How much comfort is in it, that there is such a stream running all the way of our walking with God? all the way of our fellowship, that fountain of *Christs blood* runs
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not dry, but runs along with the believer, for the cleansing of his after-pollutions, of his defilements, even in the very light it self. This then, as it is the first foundation of peace and communion with God, so it is the perpetual assurance and confirmation of it, that which first gives boldnesse, and that alone which still continues boldnesse in it. It is the first ground, and the constant warrant and security of it, without which it would be as soon dissolved as made. If that blood did not run along all this way, to wash all his steps, if the way of light and fellowship with God, were not watered, and refreshed with the continual current of this blood, certainly none could walk in it without being consumed. Therefore it is, that the mercy of God, and riches of grace in Christ, hath provided this blood for us, both to cleanse the sins of ignorance, before believing, and the sins of light, after believing, that a poor sinner may constantly go on his way, and not be broken off from God, by his infirmities and escapes in the way.

You see then the Gospel runs in these two golden streams, *pardon of sin*, and *purity of walkings*; they run undividedly, all along in one channel, yet without confusion one with another, as it is reported of some great Rivers, that run together between the same Banks, and yet remains distinct colours and natures all the way, till they part. But these streams that glad the City of God, never part one from another; the cleansing blood,
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and the purifying light, these are the intire and perfect sum of the Gospel; purification from sin, the guilt of sin, and the purity of walking in the light, flowing from that, makes up the full complexion of Christianity; which are so nearly conjoynd together, that if they be divided, they cease to be, and cannot any of them subsist, save in mens deluded imagination. The end of washing in the blood of *Christ* is, that we may come to this light, and have fellowship with it; for the darknesse of hell, the utter darkness of the curse of God, which overspreads the unbelieving soul, and eclipses all the light of Gods countenance from him, that dark and thick cloud of guiltinesse, that heap of unrenewed conversation, this, I say, must be removed by the cleansing of the *blood of Christ*, and then the soul is admitted to injoy that light, and walk into it. And it is removed chiefly for this end, that there may be no impediment in the way of this fellowship; this blood cleanseth, that you being cleansed, may henceforth walk in purity; and there is no purity like that of the light of Gods countenance, and commands; and so you are washed in the blood of *Christ*, that you may walk in the light of God, and take heed that you defile not your garments again. But if so be, (and certainly it will be, considering our weaknesse) that you defile your selves again, like foolish children, who after they have washed, run to the puddle again, forgetting that they were cleansed;

if either your daily infirmities trouble, or some grosser pollution defile and waste your conscience, know that this blood runs all along in the same channel of your obligation to holy walking, and it is as sufficient now as ever, to cleanse you from all sin, from sins of daily incurſion, and ſins of a groſſer nature; there is no exception in that blood, let there be none in your application to it, and apprehenſion of it. Now, this is not to give boldneſſe to any man to ſin, or continue in ſin, becauſe of the lengthned uſe, and continued vertue and efficacy of the blood of *Chriſt*; for if any man draw ſuch a reſult from it, and improve it to the advantage of his fleſh, he declares himſelf to have no portion in it, never to have been waſhed by it; for what ſoul can in ſobriety look upon that blood ſhed by the *Son of God*, to take away the ſins of the world, and find an emboldning to ſin from that view? Who can waſh and cleane here, and preſently think of defilement, but with indignation?

I ſpeak theſe things the rather, becauſe there is a twofold miſapprehenſion of the Goſpel among Chriſtians, and on both hands much darkneſſe and ſtumbling is occaſioned. We have poor narrow ſpirits, and do not take intire truth in its full comprehenſion, and ſo we are as unfit and unequal diſcerners of the Goſpel, and receivers of it, as he that would judge of a ſentence by one word, of a book by one page, of a harmony by one note, and of the world by one parcel of it.

it. The beauty and harmony of things consists in their intire union; and though there should appear many discrepancies, and unpleasant discords in several parts, yet all united together, make up a pleasant consort. Now this is our childish foolishnesse, that we look upon the Gospel only by halves, and this being alone seen, begets misapprehensions and mistakes in our minds; for ordinarily we supply that which we see not with some fancy of our own. When the blood of *Jesus Christ* is holden out in its full vertue, in the large extent of its efficacy, to cleanse all sin, and to make peace with God, and wipe away all transgressions, as if they had never been; the generality of you never apprehending much your own desperat condition, nor conceiving an absolute necessity of a change, you think this is all that is in the Gospel, and begin to flatter your selves, and *blesse your selves, though you live in the imaginations of your own hearts*, and never apprehends the absolute need, and inevitable sequel of walking in purity after pardon. And alace, there is something of this sometimes overtakes the hearts of true believers, in the slight and overly consideration of the mercy of God, and blood of *Christ*: you do not lay the constraint upon your hearts to a holy conversation. I say, it is not because you apprehend that blood, that you take more liberty to the flesh, but rather because you too slightly and superficially consider it, and that but the one half of it, without
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piecing into the proper end of that cleansing, which is, that we may walk in purity.

But on the other hand, some believing souls, having their desires enlarged after more holiness and conformity to God, and apprehending not only the necessity of it, but the beauty and comeliness of it, yet finding withal, how infinitely short they come, and how oft their purposes are broken and disappointed, and themselves plunged in the mire of their own filthinesse, this doth discourage them, and drives them to such a despondency, and dejection of spirit, that they are like to give over the way of holinesse as desperate. Now my beloved, for you who look upon the Gospel by a parcel, and such a parcel as enjoyns much upon you, I would earnestly beseech, to open and enlarge your hearts to receive the full body of the truth, to look upon that cleansing blood, as well as that pure light; to consider the perpetual use of the one; untill you have fully attained the other. Know that the fountain is kept open, and not shut, not only to admit you to come at first, but to give ready access in all after-defilements, and there is no word more comprehensive then this here, *it cleanseth from all sin*. All thy exceptions, doubts, and difficulties, are about some particular sins, and circumstances; thy debates runs upon some exception, but here is an universal comprehensive word, that excludes all exception; no kind of sin, either for quality, or degree, or circumstance,

stance, is too great for this blood; and therefore as you have reason to be humbled under your failings, so there is no reason to be discouraged, but rather to revive your spirits and vigour again, in the study of this walking in the light, knowing that one day we shall be *in the light, or be in it*. Nay, take this alongs with you, as your strength, and encouragement to your duty, as the greatest provocation to more purity, that there is so constant readiness of pardon in that blood.

SERMON XVI.

I Joh. 1. 8. *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive our selves, and the truth is not in us.*

THe night is far spent, the day is at hand, Rom. 13. 12. This life is but as night, even to the godly: there is some light in it, some star-light, but it is mixt with much darknesse of ignorance and sin; and so it will be, till the *Sun arise*, and the morning of their translation to Heaven come. But though it be called night in one sense, in regard of that perfect, glorious, perpetual day in Heaven: yet they are called *the children of light*, and *of the day*, and are said to *walk in the light*, and are exhorted to *walk honestly*.

nestly as in the day; because though there be a mixture of darknesse in them, of weaknesse in their judgments, and impurity in their affections, yet they are *nati ad maiora*, born to greater things, and aspiring to that perfect day: there is so much light, as to discern these night-monsters, their own corruptions, and Satans temptations, to fight continually against them: they are about this noble work, the purifying themselves from sin and darknesse: so that they lye in the middle, between the light of Angels and glorified Spirits, that hath no darknes in it; and the midnight of the rest of the world, who are buried in darknesse and wickednesse, and lye intombed in it, as the word is, 1 Job. 5. 19. The whole world *xiama* lyeth in wickednesse, but we know that we are of God: Therefore the Apostle subjoyns here very seasonably a caution, or correction of that which was spoken, about the walking in the light, and fellowship with God, which words sound out some perfection, and to our self-flattering minds, might possibly suggest some too high opinion of our selves. If we, even we that have fellowship with God, even I the Apostle, and you believing Christians, if we say, we have no sin, no darknesse in us, we do but deceive our selves, and deny the truth. But who will say that I have no sin? Solomon gives a challenge to all the world, Pro. 20. 9. Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin? And indeed, there is no man so far a stranger to him-

himself, but if he in sobriety and calmness retire into his own heart, the very evidence of the impurity of it, will extort this confession from him. As it useth to be said of an Atheist, he feels that *Divine Majesty*, within in his secret thoughts and conscience, which he denyeth with his mouth, and he is often forced to tremble at the remembrance of him whom he will not confesse; so if there be any so far bewitched and enchanted into so gross and impudent a delusion, as to assert his own perfection, and vacancy from sin, and freedom from obligation to any divine command; (as this time is fruitful of such monsters) yet I dare be bold to say, that in the secret and quiet reflections on themselves, they find that which they will not confesse: Inwardly they feel what outwardly they deny, and cannot but some time or other be filled with horreur and anguish in their consciences, by that inwardly witnessing and checking principle, when God shall give it liberty to exerce its power over them. The end of such will be, as of professed Atheists, they pretend the securest contempt, and fearlesslest misregard of God, but then, when he awakes to judgement, or declares himself in some thing extraordinary, they are subject to the most panick fears and terrours, because then, there is a party armed within against them, which they had disarmed in security, and kept in chains. So, whensoever such men, of such high pretensions, and sublime professions, who love to speak

nothing but mysteries, and presume to such glorious discoveries of new lights, of spiritual mysteries, when these, I say, have flattered themselves for a season, in the monstrous, exorbitant conceit of their own perfection, and immunity from sin; and, it may be, deceived some others too, when they have lived some time in this golden dream of innocency, the time will come, either when the mighty hand of God is on them here, or when they must enter eternity, that they shall awake, and find all their iniquities in battel array, mustered by the Lord of hosts, in their conscience against themselves; and then they shall be the rarest examples of fear, terror, and unbelief, who pretended to the greatest confidence, clearness, and innocency. My beloved, let us establish this as an infallible rule, to discern the spirits by, and to know what Religion is, if it tend to glorify God, and abase man, to make him more humble, as well as holy, if it give the true and perfect discovery of God to man, and of man to himself, *that is true Religion and undefiled.* But away with these sublime speculations, these winged and airy mysteries, those pretensions to high discoveries, and new lights, if they do not increase that good old light of *humble walking with thy God, &c.* if they tend to the loosing of the obligation of divine commands off thee; if they ravish man so high, that he seeth not himself any more to be a poor miserable and darkned creature. Certainly, that

is no fellowship with the pure light, which is not continually the discovery and further manifestation of more sin and darknesse in us. For, what is a mans light in the darknight of this life? but the clearer light of that darknesse that is in man; and his holinesse, what is it? but the abhorring of himself for that. It is true, something further is attained then the knowing of this, but it is alwayes so far short of that original pattern, that the best way of expressing our conformity to it, is by how much we apprehend our distance and difformity from it.

But, my beloved, this is not all that is here meant, nor must we take it so grossly, as if this did only check the open professors of a sinlesse, spotlesse sanctity. Nay certainly, there is another way of saying this, then by the tongue, and many other wayes of self-deceiving, then that grosse one, many more universal and more dangerous, because lesse discernable. There is something of this, that even true believers may fall into, and there is something of it more common to the generality of professed Christians.

Among believers in Christ, there is much difference in self-judging; extream contrarieties, both between diverse persons, and in one and the same, at diverse times. You know that some are kept in the open view of their own sins and infirmities, and while they aim at holiness, they are wholly disabled to that worthy indeavour, by their discouragements, arising from the apprehension

hension of their own weaknesse, and infinite shortcoming. Now to elevate and strengthen such spirits, that word was seasonably calt in, *and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.* For it properly belongs to the comfort of such fainting souls, and it is all one as if he had said, up, and be doing, and the blood of *Christ* shall cleanse your evil doings. He goeth not about to perswade them to have better thoughts of themselves, or lower apprehensions of their sin, but only to have higher and more suitable thoughts of *Christ*, and the vertue of his blood. And this is the only cure, not to abate from that low esteem of our selves, but to add to the esteem, and grow in the lively apprehension of *Christ*. I would not counsel you to think your selves better, but to think better of him, that all your confidence may arise from him.

Now there are others, and it may be, that same person at another time, (for the wind of temptation windes about, and is sometimes in one corner, sometimes in another; our adversary useth many stratagems, and will seem to flee before us, in yielding us the victory over our unbelief, that he may in his flight return, and throw some other dart upon us unawares;) when they have attained any fervency of desires, and hight of design after holinesse, and walking with God, and this is seconded with any lively in-deavours, and this confirmed and strengthened with these presences of God, and accessles into
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the soul, that fill it with some sweetnesse; then, I say, they are ready to apprehend too highly of themselves, as if they had attained, and to look below upon others with some disdain, then there is not that present discovery of themselves, that may intermingle humble mourning with it, but a kind of unequal measuring their attainments by their desires, which in all true Christians are exceedingly mounted above themselves. Now indeed, this is in effect, and really to say, *we have no sin*. Herein is a delusion; a self-deceiving fancy, that begets too-much self-pleasing. Let us know where our stance is, infinitely below either our duty, or our desire, and re-mind this often, that we may not be in hazard to be drunk with self-love, and self-deceit in this particular. Besides, are there not many Christians, that having been once illuminated, and had some serious exercises in their souls, both of sorrow for sin, and fear of wrath, and comfort by the Gospel, and being accustomed to some discharge of religious duties in private and publick, they sit down here, and hath not mind of further progresse; they think if they keep that stance they are well, and so have few designs or indeavours after more communion with God, or purification from sin. Now this makes them degenerat to formality, they wither and become barren, and are exposed by this to many temptations, which overcome them. But, my beloved, is not this really and indeed to say, *we have no sin*? Do not your walking,

ing, and the posture of your spirits import so much, as if you had no sin to wrestle with, no more holiness to aspire unto, as if you had no further race to run to obtain the Crown. Do not deceive your selves, by thinking it sufficient to have so much honesty and grace, as in your opinion may put you over the black line of regeneration, as if ye would seek no more then is precisely necessary for salvation? Truly, if ye be so minded, you give a miserable hint, that you are not yet translated from the black side of darkness. I do not say that all such are unconverted, but if you continue thus, without stirring up your selves to a daily conversion and renovation, ye do too much to blot out the evidence of your conversion, and at length it may prove to some a self-destroying deceit, when they shall find themselves not past over that line that passeth between Heaven and hell, which they were studying to find out only, that they might passe so far over it, as might keep their soul and hell asunder, without earnest desires of advancement towards Heaven in conformity to God. Now for the generality of professed Christians, though there be none hath that general confession of sin oftner and more readily in their mouths, yet, I suppose, it is easie to demonstrat that there is much of this self-deceit in them, which declares that *the truth is not in them*. You know both God and man constructs of men by their wayes, not by their words; and the Lord may interpret

pret your hearts by their diſpoſition, and raiſe a collection of Atheiſm out of all together; *the fool bath ſaid in his heart, &c.* Even to ſay, many pretended Chriſtians ſay in their heart, *We have no ſin.* How prove ye that? I ſeek nothing elſe to prove it, then your own ordinary clearings and excuſings of your ſelves; ye confeſſe ye are ſinners, and break all the Commands, yet come to particulars, and I know not one of twenty that will cordially or ſeriouſly take with almoſt any ſin, yea, what you have granted in a general, you retract and deny it in all the particulars; which declares both that even that which you ſeem to know, you are altogether ſtrangers to the real truth of it, and that you are over-blinded with a ſord love of your ſelves. I know not ~~to what~~ what purpoſes your general acknowledgments are; but to be a mask or ſhadow to deceive you, to be a blind to hide you from your ſelves; ſince the moſt part of you, whenſoever challenged of any particular ſin, or inclination to it, juſtify your ſelves; and when ever ye are put to a particular confeſſion of your ſins, you have all wrapt up in ſuch a bundle of conſuſion, that you never know one ſin by another. Certainly, *ye deceive your ſelves, and the truth is not in you.*

Let me add moreover another inſtance; Do you not ſo live, and walk in ſin ſo ſecurely, ſo impenitently, as if you had no ſin, no fear of Gods wrath? Do not the moſt part contented-

ly and peaceably live in so much ignorance of the Gospel, as if they had no need of Christ? and so by consequence, as if they had no sin. For if you did believe in the heart, and indeed consider, that your hearts are sinks of iniquity and impurity, would you not think it necessary to apply to the Physician? And would you not then labour to know the Physician, & the Gospel which is the report of him? Certainly, in as much as you take no pains for the knowledge of a *Saviour*, you declare that you know not your sin; for if ye knew the one, ye could not but search to know the other. What is the voice of most mens walking? Doth it not proclaim this, that they think there is no sin in them? For if there be sin in you, is there not a curse upon you, and wrath before you? And if you did really see the one, would you not see the other? And did you see it, would it not drive you to more serious thoughts? Would it not fright you? Would it not cause you often to retire in to your selves, and from the world? And above all, how precious would the tidings of a *Saviour* be, that now are common and contemptible? Would you not every day wash in that blood? Would the current of repentance dry? But, forasmuch as you are not exercised this way, give no thoughts nor time for reconciliation with God, walk without any fear of hell, and without any earnest and serious study of changing your wayes, and purifying your hearts; in a word, though ye confesse sin in the general,

general, yet your whole carriage of heart and wayes, declare so much, that you think it not a thing much to be feared, or that a man should busie himself about it; that a man may live in it, and be well here, and hereafter. And is not this to deny the very nature of sin, and to deceive your own souls?

And is not this to deny the very nature of sin, and to deceive your own souls?

SERMON XXVII.

I Joh. 1. 9. *If we confesse our sins, he is faithful, and just to forgive us our sins, &c.*

THE current of sin dries not up, but runs constantly while we are in this life; it is true, it is much diminished in a believer, and it runs not in such an universal flood over the whole man, as it is in the unbeliever, yet there is a living spring of sin within the godly, which is never ceasing to drop out pollution and defilement, either upon their whole persons, or at least, to intermingle it with their good actions. Now, there is no comfort for this, but this one, that there is another stream of the blood of Jesus Christ, that never dries up, is never exhausted, never emptied, but flows as full and as free, as clear and fresh as ever it did: and this is so great, and of so great vertue, that it is able to swallow up the stream of our pollutions, and to take away the

the daily filth of a believers conversation. Now indeed, though the blood of *Jesuw Christ* be of such infinit vertue and efficacy, that it were sufficient to cleanse the sins of the whole world, it would be an over-ransome for the souls of all men, there is so much worth in it: that flood of guiltinesse that hath drowned the world, this flood of *Christs blood* that gushed out of his side, is of sufficient vertue to cleanse it perfectly away; notwithstanding of this absolute, universal sufficiency, yet certain it is, that it is not actually applied unto the cleansing of all mens sins, but yet the most part of men are still drowned in the deluge of their own wickedness, and lyeth intomb'd in darkness; therefore it concerns us to know the way of the application of this blood, to the cleansing of sinners; and this way is set down in this verse, *If we confesse our sins, he is just to forgive.* There was something hinted at obscurely in the preceeding verse, for when he shews, that such as say they have no sin, who either by the disposition of their hearts, or carriage of their wayes, do by interpretation say, they want sin, such deceive themselves, and the truth is not in them; and so they have no benefit of that blood that cleanseth from all sin, and so it is imported here, that though the blood of *Christ* be fully sufficient to cleanse all sin, yet it is not so prostituted and basely spent upon sinners, as to be bestowed upon them who do not know their sins, and never enter into any serious & impartial examination

mination of themselves; such, though they say they are sinners, yet never descending into themselves to search their own hearts and wayes, and so never coming to the particular knowledge of their sins, and feeling of them, they cannot at all make application of that blood to their own consciences, either seriously or pertinently: Though the river and fountain of *Christs blood* run by them, in the daily preaching of the Gospel, yet being destitute of this daily self-inspection, and self-knowledge, being altogether ignorant of themselves, they can no more wash here, then these who never heard of this blood, they being strangers to themselves, sets them at as great distance and estrangement from the blood of *Christ*, as if they were wholly strangers to the very preaching of this blood. Let us then have this first established in our hearts, that there is no cleansing from sin, without the knowledge of sin, and there is no true knowledge of sin, without a serious soul-examination of sin; these are knit together in their own nature; for how should our sins be pardoned, when we know nothing of them but in a confused generality, that can never affect the heart? How should our sins not be opened and discovered before the holiness of God, when they are alwayes covered unto us, and hid from our eyes? Certainly, the righteousness and wisdom of God requires, that such a monstrous thing, so great an enemy of Gods holiness, be not wholly past away in silence with-

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our observation. If we do not observe, he will; for to what purpose should pardon be so lavished upon them who are not capable to know what favour and grace is in it? And certainly, that none can know, without the feeling knowledge of the height and heinousness of sin. Now, I pray you, how should ye know your sins, when ye will not allow any time for the searching of your selves? Many cannot say that ever they did purposely and deliberately withdraw from the world, and separat their spirits for this businesse of self-examination: and therefore you remain perpetually strangers to your selves, and as great strangers to the power and vertue of this blood.

Now in this *vers.* he declares it plainly, in what way and method sin is pardoned by this blood. By the former *vers.* we have so much, that it is necessary we must search and try our wayes, that so we may truly know our sins, and charge them upon our selves; and here it is superadded that we must confesse them to him: And the promise is annexed, *he is just and faithful to forgive.* Now this confession of sin is very fitly subjoyned, both to that which he declared of that great end of the Gospel, *communion with God*, and that which was immediatly holden forth of the remaining vertue of *Christs* blood; for might a poor soul say, How shall I come to partake of that blessed society? I am a sinner, and so an enemy to God, How shall this enmity be removed? And if the answer be made, *The blood of Jesus Christ cleans-*
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eth from all sin, and so maketh accessse for a sinner to enter into this society; Yet a question remains, And how shall the vertue of that be applied to my soul? It is sufficient I know for all, but what way may I have the particular benefit of it? Here it is fully satisfied, *If we confesse our sins, God is just and faithfull to forgive.* He lyeth under some obligation to pardon us. Now, many of you may think, if this be the way, and these be the terms of pardon, then we hope all shall be pardoned, for if there be no more but to confesse our sins, who will not willingly do that, and who doth not daily do it? as one said, if it be sufficient to accuse, none will be innocent: *Si accusasse sufficiat, nemo innocens erit.* So you may think, *Si confiteri sufficiat, nemo reus erit.* If it be sufficient to confesse, none will be guilty. But, my beloved, let us not deceive ourselves with the present first apprehensions of words that occur in this kind; it is true, as ye take confession, there is nothing more ordinary, but if it be taken in the true Scripture-meaning, and in the realest sense, I fear there is nothing among men so extraordinary: I desire you may but consider how you take this word in your dealings with men, you take it certainly in a more real sense then you use it in Religion. If any had done you some great wrong or injury, suppose your servant, or inferiour, what acknowledgment would you take from him of his wrong? If he confessed his wrong only in general ambiguous terms,

terms, if he did it either lightly, or without any
sense or sorrow for it, if he did withal excuse and
extenuat his fault, and never ceased notwithstanding
of all his confession to do the like wrong
when occasion offered, would you not think this
a mockery? And would it not rather provoke
you, then pacifie you? Now, when ye take words
in so real and deep significations in your own
matters, what grosse delusion is it, that you take
them in the slightest and emptiest meaning in
these things that relate to God? And I am sure
the most part of mens confessions are of that na-
ture which I have described, general, ignorant,
senselesse, without any particular view, or lively
feeling of the vilenesse and loathsomnesse of sin,
and their own hearts; when ever it comes to
particulars, there is a multitude of extenuati-
ons and pretences, to hide and cover the sin;
and generally men never cease the more from
finning, it puts no stop in their running; as the
horse to the battel: to day they confesse it, and
to morrow they act it again with as much de-
light as before. Now, of this I may say, *offer it*
to thy Governour, and see if he will be pleased with
thee, or let another offer such an acknowledg-
ment of wrong to thee, and see if it will please
thee: and if it will not, why deceive ye your
selves with the outward visage of things, in these
matters that are of greatest soul-concernment?
Should they not be taken in the most inward and
substantial signification that can be? lest you be
deceived

deceived with false appearances, and while you give but a shadow of confession, you receive but a shadow of forgiveness, such a thing as will not carry and bear you out before *Gods Tribunal*. Therefore we must needs take it thus, that confession of sin is the work of the whole man, and not of the mouth only. It is the heart, tongue, and all that is in a man, joyning together to the acknowledgment of sin, and *Gods* righteousness: Therefore it includes in it, not only a particular knowledge of our offences, and the temper of our hearts, but a sensible feeling of the loathsomenesse and hainousnesse of these: and this is the spring that it flows from, from a broken and contrite heart, that is bruised under the apprehensions of the weight of guiltinesse, and is imbibtered with the sense of the gall of iniquity, that possesseth the heart. Here then is the great moment of confession and repentance, What is the inward fountain it flows from: If the heart be brought to the distinct and clear view of it self, and to discern the iniquity and plague of it, and so to fall down under the mighty hand of God, and before his Tribunal, as guilty, as not being able or willing to open his mouth in an excuse or extenuation of sin, or to plead for compassion from any consideration in himself; a soul thus plac'd, between iniquities set in order and battel array, on the one hand, and the holy Law and righteousness of God on the other hand; the filthinesse of the one, filling with shame and

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confusion,

confusion, and the deadnesse of the other, causing fear and trembling; in this posture, I say, for a soul to come and fall at the Judges feet, and make supplication to him in his Son Christ; thus being inwardly pressed to vent and pour out our hearts before him, in the confession of our sins, and to flie unto the City of refuge, his mercy and grace that is declared in Jesu Christ; this, I say, is indeed to confesse our sins: For then confession is an exonerat[i]on and disburdening of the heart; it flows from the abundance of the inward contrition of it: And as this must be the spring of it, so there is another stream that will certainly flow from the ingenuous confession of our sins, that is, a forsaking of them; these are the two streams that flow from one head and spring, the inward fountain of contrition and sorrow for sin; there is a holy indignation kindled in the heart against sin, and an engagement upon such a soul, as indeed flies to mercy, to renounce sin; and here is the compleat nature of true repentance. Solomon joyns them, *He that confesseth and forsaketh shall have mercy*, Prov. 28. 13. And this is opposed to covering of sins, *For he that covereth his sins shall not prosper*. And what is that to cover his sin? Confessing them in a general confused notion, without any distinct knowledge, or sense of particular guiltinesse, that is a covering of sins, or confessing sin, and not forsaking of it, that is a covering of sin; for, to act sin over again, with continual

trivial flesh delight and vigour, is to retract our confessions, and to bury and cover them with the mould of new transgressions. Now, take this unto you, *you shall not prosper*, what can be said worse? For you are but in a dream of happinesse, and you shall one day be shaken out of it, and that fancied pardon shall evanish, and then your sins that you covered in this manner, shall be discovered before the Judge of the world, and *you shall not stand in judgment.*

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SERMON XVIII.

1 Joh. 1. 9. *If we confesse our sins he is faithful, and just to forgive our sins, &c.*

THE freedom of Gods grace, and the greatness of his wisdom, shine forth most brightly in the dispensation of the Gospel, and both of them beautifie and illustrat one another. That there is first, an expiation of sin by the blood of *Jesus Christ*, that a way is laid down of reconciling the world, and that *by the blood of the Cross*, that peace is purchased, and so preached unto sinners, as a thing already procured, and now only to be applyed unto the soul by faith; herein doth the ineffimable riches of the grace of God expose it self to the view of Angels and Men. That the great work of Redemption is ended,

ere it come to us; and there remains nothing, but to publish it to the world, and invite us to come and receive it, and have a part in it; all is ready, the feast prepared, and set on the Table, and there wants nothing but Guests to eat of it, and these are daily called by the Gospel to come to this Table which the wisdom of the Father hath prepared for us, without either our knowledge or concurrence. Besides, the very terms of proposing the Gospel, speak forth absolute freedom: What can be more free and easie then this? *Christ is sent to die for sinners, and to redeem them from the curse, only receive him, come to him, and believe in him.* He hath undertaken to save, only do you consent too, and give up your name to him: ye have nothing to do to satisfie Justice, or purchase salvation, only be willing that he do it for you, or rather acquiesce to that he hath done already, and rest on it. But how shall our sins be pardoned, and Justice satisfied? Only confesse your sins to him, and ye are forgiven, not for your confession, but for *Christ*, only acknowledge thine iniquity and wrongs, and he hath taken another way to repair his Justice, then by thy destruction and condemnation: he is so far from extending his Justice against thee, that he is rather engaged upon his faithfulness and justice to forgive thee, because of his promises.

Yet, ye would not conceive so of this manner of proposal of forgiveness and salvation, as if the

the requiring of such a thing as repentance in thee, were any derogation from the absoluteness of his grace; for it is not required, either to the point of satisfaction to *Gods Justice*, and expiation of sin; for that is done already upon the *Crosse*. *Christ* was not offered to save sinners, he was not sent upon the previous condition of their repentance: Nay, while we were yet enemies, *Christ* died for the ungodly; so that to the businesse of our redemption, there was no concurrence upon our part, nor influence upon it by our carriage; for he considered us as sinners, and miserable, and so saved us. And now, to the actual application of these preventing mercies, it's true, it is needful in the wise and reasonable dispensation of *God*, that sinners be brought to the knowledge, and sensible acknowledgment of their sin and misery, and so be upon rational inducements of misery within, and mercy without, of self-indigency, and *Christs* sufficiency, be drawn in to *Jesus Christ*, and so to a partaking of these purchased priviledges of forgiveness of sin, peace with *God*, &c. I say, all this is so far from diminishing a jot of that absolute freedom of grace, that it rather joyntly proclaims the riches of grace and wisdom both, that repentance should be given to an impenitent sinner, and faith freely bestowed on an unbelieving sinner, and withall, that remission and salvation, together with faith and repentance, should be brought to us by his death, while we were yet enemies; this

doth declare the most unparalell'd bounty and grace, that the heart of man can imagine; and withal, that remission of sins is joyned to confession, and salvation to faith, herein the wisdom of God triumphs; for, what way is it possible to declare that freedom of grace, to the sensible conviction of a sinner, and so to demonstrat it to all mens consciences, except by making them return within, to see their own absolute unworthinesse, vilenesse, and incorrespondency to such mercies, and so drawing an acknowledgment of his grace, from the mouths and consciences of all? How shall a soul know that rich superabundant grace, if he know not the abundance of his sins? How shall he professe the one, except he withal confesse the other? Let us imagine an impenitent sinner, continuing in rebellion, pardoned and forgiven: and is there any thing more contrary to common sense and reason, to be in Gods favour, and yet not accepting that favour, to be a friend, and yet an enemy; to have sins forgiven, and yet not known nor confessed, these, I say, sound some plain dissonancy and discord to our very first apprehensions. Certainly, this is the way to declare the glory of his grace, in the hiding and covering of sin, even to discover sin to the sinner; else if God should hide sin, and it be hid withal from the conscience, both chy sin and Gods grace should be hid and covered, neither the one nor the other would appear. Take it thus then, the confession of sin is not for this

this end, to have any causal influence upon thy remission, or to procure any more favour and liking with God; but it is simply this, the confession of sin is the most accommodat way of the profession and publication of the grace of God, in the forgiving of sins; Faith and Repentance are not set down as conditions pre-required on thy part, that may procure salvation or forgiveness, but they are inseparably annexed unto salvation and forgiveness, to the end that they may manifest to our sensible conviction, that grace, and freedom of grace, which shines in forgiveness and salvation.

He is just and faithful, &c. Herein is the wonder of the grace of God increased, that when we are under an obligation to infinit punishment for sin, and bound guilty before his Justice, that the most great and potent Lord, who can easily rid himself of all his enemies, and do all his pleasure in Heaven and Earth, should come under an obligation to man to forgive him his sins. A strange exchange, *man* is standing bound by the cords of his own sins over to the Justice of God, he is under that insoluble tye of guiltinesse; *God* in the mean time is free and loosed from the obligation of the first Covenant, that is, his promise of giving life to man; we have loosed him from that voluntary ingagement, and are bound under a curse; and yet, behold the permutation of grace, *man* is loosed from sin to which he was bound, and *God* is bound to forgive sin, to which he

he was not bound. He enters in a new and voluntary ingagement by his promise, and giveth right to poor creatures to sue and seek forgiveness of him, according to his faithfulness: Yet in this plea, as it becomes us to use confidence, because he gives us ground by his promise, so we should season it with humility, knowing how infinitely free and voluntary his condescension is, being alwayes mindful, that he may in righteousness exact punishment of us for sin, rather then we seek forgiveness from him; and yet seek it we ought, because he hath ingaged his faithful promise; which opportunity to neglect, and not to improve, either through fear or security, were as high contempt and disobedience to him, as these sins by which we offend him.

Certainly, the very *Name of God* revealed to us, or known by natures light, those general characters of his Name, *Mercy and Goodness, Power and Greatness*, might suffice to so much, as to make us in the apprehensions of our own guiltiness and provocations of his Holiness, to look no other way, then to his own merciful and gracious nature: suppose we had nothing of a promise from him, by which he is bound; yet, as the very apprehension of the general goodness, and unlimited bounty, and original happiness that is in God, ought naturally to draw the creature towards him in all its wants, to supplicate his fulness, that can supply all necessities, without lessening his own abundance; even so, if we did only

only apprehend that God is the fountain of mercy, and that he is infinitely above us and our injuries; and that all our being and well-being eternally, conſiſts in his ſole favour; this, I ſay, alone conſidered, might draw us to a pouring out our hearts before him, in the acknowledgment of our guiltineſſe, and caſting ourſelves upon his mercy (as the term is uſed in War) when there is no quarter promiſed, and no capitulation made; it is the laſt refuge of a deſperat ſinner, to render unto God upon mercy, to reſign himſelf to his free diſpoſal; Since I cannot but periſh (may a ſoul ſay) without him, there is no way of eſcaping from his wrath, I will rather venture, and go in to the King, and if I periſh I periſh; there is more hope in this way to come to him, then to ſtie from him, perhaps he may ſhew an act of abſolute ſoveraign goodneſſe, and be as glorious in paſſing by an offence, as juſt in puniſhing it. Do I not ſee in man, (in whom the Divine Majeſty hath imprinted ſome characters of conſcience and honeſty) that it is more generous and noble to forgive, then to revenge? And do I not ſee generally among men, clemency and compaſſion is commended above ſeverity, and rigour, though juſt, eſpecially towards theſe who are inferiour, weak, unable to reſiſt, and have yeilded themſelves to mercy. Now, ſhall I not much more apprehend that of God, which I admire in a ſinful man? Shall not that be moſt perfect in him, which is but a maimed and broken piece
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of his image in lost man? Certainly, it is the glory of God to conceal an offence, as well as to publish it; and he can shew as much Greatnesse and Majesty, in Mercy, as in Justice: therefore I will wholly commit my self to him. I think a man ought to reason so, from the very natural knowledge he hath of God. But when ye have not only his Name and Nature published, but his Word and Promise so often proclaimed, himself come under some eye to receive and accept graciously all sinners that flie in under the shadow of his wings of mercy; then O, with how much perswasion and boldnesse should we come to him, and lay open our sins before him, who not only may pardon them, and not only is likely to do it, seeing he hath a gracious nature, but certainly will pardon them, cannot but do it, because his faithfulness requireth it. Certainly, he hath superadded his Word to his Name, his Promise to his Nature, to confirm our faith, and give us ample ground of strong consolation.

There is another more suitable notion about the justice of God, in forgiving sin; it hath some truth in the thing it self, but whether it be imported here, I dare not certainly affirm. Some take his *faithfulness* in relation to his word of promise, and his *justice* in relation to the price and ranfome payed by *Christ*, importing as much as this, what ever sinner comes to God in *Christ*, confessing their own guiltinesse in sincerity, and supplicating for pardon, he cannot in justice refuse

ful to give it out unto them, ſince he hath taken compleat ſatisfaction of *Chriſt*. When a ſinner ſeeks a diſcharge of all ſin, by vertue of that blood, the *Lord* is bound by his own juſtice to give it out, and to write a free remiſſion to them; ſince he is fully payed, he cannot but diſcharge us, and cancell our bonds. So then a poor ſinner that deſires mercy, and would forſake ſin, hath a twofold ground to ſuit this forgivenesse, upon *Chriſts blood*, and *Gods own word*, *Chriſts purchaſe and payment*, and the *Fathers promiſe*, he is juſt and righteous, and therefore he cannot deny the one, nor yet take two ſatisfactions, two payments for one debt; and he is faithful, ſo he cannot but ſtand to the other, that is his promiſe; and thus is forgivenesse aſcertained and aſſured unto the confeſſing ſinner. If any would take this in relation to confeſſion, as if it reflected upon that which preceeded, and the meaning ſhould be, if any man confeſſe his ſin, he is juſt to requite confeſſion with remiſſion, he cannot in righteouſneſſe deny one that deſerves it ſo well, he is juſt to return ſome ſuitable recompence, to ſuch a humble confeſſion; this ſenſe were a perverting of the whole Goſpel, and would overturn the foundations of grace, for, there is no connexion between our confeſſion, and his remiſſion, but that which the abſolute good pleaſure of his will hath made; beſides, that repentance is as free grace given from the exalted Prince, as remiſſion of ſins is.

SERMON XIX.

1 Job. 1. 9. *If we confesse our sins he is faithful, and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousnesse,*

Verf. 10. *If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, &c.*

AND who will not confesse their sin, say yeau? Who doth not confesse sins daily, and therefore, who is not forgiven and pardoned? But stay, and consider the matter again, take not this upon your first light apprehensions, which in Religion are commonly empty, vain, and superficial; but search the Scriptures, and your own hearts, that ye may know what confession means. It may be said of that external custome of confession that many of you have, that the Lord hath not required it, *Sacrifices and burnt offerings thou wouldest not*, some external submissions and confessions, which ye take for compensation for sins and offences against God, these, I say, are but abomination to the Lord; but a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise, Plal. 51. 16, 17. And lo, I come to do thy will, I delight in it, Plal. 40. 7, 8. When external professions and confessions, are separated from the internal contrition of the heart, and godly sorrow for sin; and when both internal contrition, and external

external profeſſion and confeſſion are divided from conformity, or ſtudy of conformity to Gods will, then they are in no better acceptance with God, then theſe external ſacrifices which God rejected, though he had required them, becauſe they were diſjoyned from the true life of them, and ſpiritual meaning, that is, faith in a Mediator, and love to obedience. If confeſſion flow not from ſome contrition of heart, if there be not ſome inward ſpring of this kind, the heart opened, and unfolding its very in-ſide before God, breaking in pieces, which makes both pain or ſenſe, and likewise gives the clearer view of the inward parts of the heart; and if it be not joyned with affection to Gods will and Law, earneſt love to new obedience, it is but a vain, empty, and counterſeit confeſſion, that denyes it ſelf. I ſuppoſe, a man confeſſe ſin which he feels not, or forſakes not, in ſo doing he declares that he knows not the nature of ſin, he may know ſuch an action, that it is commonly called ſin, and, it may be, is ſhamed and cenſured among men, and therefore he confeſſeth it, but while he confeſſeth it without ſenſe or feeling, he declares that he takes it not up as ſin, hath not ſound the vileneſſe and loathſomneſſe of the nature of it, nor beheld it as it is a violation of the *moſt high Lords Laws*, and a provocation of his glorious holineſſe. Did a ſoul view it thus, as it is re- preſented in Gods ſight, as it diſhonours that *glorious Majeſty*, and hath manifeſt rebellion in it
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against him, and as it defiles and pollutes our spirits, he could not, I say, thus look upon it, but he would find some inward soul-aborrancy and displicence at it, and himself too. How monstrous would it make him in his own sight? It could not but affect the heart, and humble it in secret before God; whereas your forced and strained confessions made in publick, they are meerly taken on then, and proceed from no inward principle, there is no shadow of any soul-humiliation in secret, but as some use to put on sackcloth when they come to make that profession, and put it off when they go out; so you put on a habit of confession in publick, and put it off you when you go out of the Congregation. To ly mourning before the Lord, in your secret retirements, that you are strangers to. But I wonder how you should thus mock God, that you will not be as serious and real in confessing, as in sinning? Will ye sin with the whole man, and confesse only with the mouth? Will ye act sin with delight, and not confesse it with a true sorrow that indeed affects the heart? Now, do you honour God by confession, when the manner of it declares, that you feel not the bitterness of sin, and conceive not the holiness and righteousness of God, whom you have to do withall? Even so, when you confesse sin, which you do not forsake, you in so far declare that you know not sin, what it is you confesse, and so, that you have mocked him who will not be mocked; for, what

what a mockery is it, to confesse these faul-
 tues, which we have no solid effectual purpose to re-
 form? To vomit up our sins by confession, that
 we may with more desire and lust lick up the vo-
 mit again, and to pretend to wash, for nothing
 else, but to returne to the puddle and defile again.
 My brethren, *out of the same fountain comes not
 bitter water and sweet,* Jam. 3. 11. Since that
 which ordinarily proceeds from you, is bitter,
 unflavoury to God and man, carnal, earthly, and
 sensual, your wayes are a displayed banner against
 Gods will, then lay your account, all your pro-
 fessions and acknowledgments are of the same na-
 ture, they are but a little more sugared over,
 and their inward nature is not changed, as unac-
 ceptable to God, as your sins are.

I would give you some characters out of the
 Text, to discover unto you the vanity and emp-
 tinesse of your ordinary confessions. The con-
 fession of sin must be *particular, universal, per-
 petual or constant.* Particular, I say, for there
 are many thousands who confesse that they are
 sinners, and yet do not at all confesse their sins.
 For, to confesse sins, is to confesse their own
 real, actual guiltinesse, that which they indeed
 have committed, or are inclined to do. So the
 true and sincere confession of a repenting people
 is expressed, 1 King. 8. 38. *What prayer or sup-
 plication soever be made by any man which shall
 know the plague of his own heart, and spread forth
 his hands, then hear thou in Heaven, and forgive
 every*

every man whose heart thou knowest. Now consider whether or not you be thus acquainted with your own hearts and ways, as to know your particular plague and predominant. Are you not rather wholly strangers to your selves, especially the plague of your hearts? There are few that keep so much as a Record or Register of their actions done against Gods Law, or their neglects of his will, and therefore when you are particularly posed about your sins, or the challenge of sin, you can speak nothing to that, but that you never knew one sin by another; that is indeed, you never observed your sins, you never knew any sin, but contented your self with the tradition you received that you were sinners; but if any man be used to reflect upon his own wayes, yet generally, the most part of men are altogether strangers to their hearts; if they know any evil of themselves, it is at most, but something done, or undone, some commission or omission, but nothing of the inward fountain of sin is discovered. I beseech you then, do not deceive your selves with this general acknowledgment that you are sinners, while in the meantime your real particular sins are hid from you, and you cannot choose but hide in a generality from God. Certainly, you are far from forgiveness, and that *blessednesse* of which *David* speaks, *Psal. 32.* for this belongs to the man that hideth not his sins, in whose heart is no guile. And this is the plainnesse and sincerity of the heart, right-ly

ly to discern its own plagues, and unfold them to him. *David*, no doubt, would any time have confessed that he was a sinner, but mark how heavy the wrath of God was on him for all that, because he came not to a plain, ingenuous, and humble acknowledgment of his particular sins. *I confessed my sin, and mine iniquity I hid not:* While you confesse only in general terms, you confesse others sins rather than yours, but this is it, to descend into our own hearts, and find out our just and true accusation, our real debt, to charge our selves as narrowly as we can, that he may discharge us fully, and forgive us freely.

Next, I say, confession must be *universal*, that is, of all sin, without partiality, or respect to any sin. I doubt if a man can truly repent of any sin, except he in a manner repent of all sin; or truly forsake one sin, except there be a divorcement of the heart from, and forsaking of all sin: therefore the Apostle saith, *if we confess our sins*, not *sin* simply, but *sins*, taking in all the body and collection of them; for it is opposed to that, *if we say we have no sin*, &c. Then there lyes a necessity upon us to confesse what we have, we have all sin, and so should confesse all sins. Now, my meaning is not, that it is absolutely necessary that a soul come to the particular knowledge, and acknowledgment of all his sins; whether of ignorance, or infirmity, nay, that is not possible; for *who can understand his errors?* (saith David) *cleanse thou me from secret sins*; Psal. 19. 12. There are many sins of

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ignorance,

ignorance, that we know not to be sins, and many escapes of infirmity, that we do not advert to, which otherwise we might know. Now I do not impose that burden on a soul, to confesse every individual sin of that kind, but this certainly must be, there must be such a discovery of the nature of sin, and the loathsomnesse of it in Gods sight, and the hainous guilt of it, as may abase and humble the soul in his presence; there must be some distincter and clearer view of the dispositions and lusts of the heart, then men attain generally unto; and withall, a discovery of the holy and spiritual meaning of Gods Law, which may unfold a multitude of transgressions, that are hid from the world, and make sin to abound in a mans sight and sense; (*for when the Law enters, sin abounds*) and to close up this, as there are many sins now discovered unto such a soul, which lay hid before, *the light having shined in upon the darknesse*; and above all, the desperat wickednesse of the heart is presented, so there is no sin known and discerned, but there is an equal, impartial sorrow for it, and indignation against it. As a believer hath respect to all Gods commands, and loves to obey them, so the penitent soul hath an impartial hatred of all sin, even the dearest and most beloved idol, and desires unfeignedly to be rid of it. Hence your usual publick confessions of sin, are wipt out of the number of true and sincere confessions, because you pretend to repent of one sin, and in the

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Verf. 9, 10. *the 1. Epistle of John.* 179

the mean time, neither do ye know a multitude of other sins that prevail over you, nor do you mourn for them, nor forsake them. Nay, you do not examine your selves that way, to find out the temper of your hearts, or tenor and course of your wayes. You pretend to repent for drunkenness, or such like, and yet you are ordinary cursers, swearers, liars, railers, neglecters of prayer, prophaneers of the Sabbath, and such like, and these you do not withal mourn for. In sum, he that mourns only for the sin that men censure, he knoweth and confesseth no sin sincerely; if you would indeed return unto God from some grosse evils, you must be divorced in your affections from all sin.

Then this confession should be *perpetuated and continued*, as long as we are in this life, for that is imported by compacing this *vers.* with these it stands between. *If we say we have no sin*, if we say at any time, while we are in this life, if we imagine or dream of any such perfection here, *we lie*. Now, what should we do then, since sin is alwayes lodging in our mortal bodies, during this time of necessary abode beside an ill neighbour? What should be our exercise? even this, Confesse your sins, confesse, I say, as long as you have them, draw out this, the length of that: Be continually groaning to him under that body of death, and mourning under your daily infirmities and failings; that stream of corruptions runs continually, let the stream of your con-

trition and confession run as unceffantly; and there is another stream of *Christs blood*, that runs constantly too, to cleane you. Now herein is the discovery of the vanity and deceitfulnesse of many of your confessions, publick and private, the current of them soon dries up, there is no perpetuity or constancy in them, no daily humbling or abasing your selves, but all that is, is by fits and starts, upon some transient convictions, or outward censures and rebukes: and thus men quickly cover and bury their sins in oblivion and security, and forget what manner of persons they were, they are not under a daily, impartial examination of their wayes, takes notice of nothing but some solemn and grosse escapes, and these are but a short time under their view.

Now, let me apply a little to the encouragement of poor souls, who being inwardly burdened with the weight of their own guiltiness, exoner themselves by confession in his bosome; as you have two suits, and two desires to him, one, that your sins may be forgiven, another, that they may be subdued; so he hath two solemn engagements and ties to satisfy you; one, to forgive your sins, and another, to cleanse you from all unrighteousness. The soul that is truly penitent, is not only desirous of pardon of sin, that is not the chief or only design of such a soul in application to *Christ*; but it is withal to be purified from sin, and all unrighteousnesse, and to have ungodly lusts cleansed away; and herein is the great probation of such an ones reality, it will not suffice

Verf. 9, 10. *the 1. Epistle of John.* 181

or satisfie such an one, to be assured of delivery from wrath and condemnation, but he must likewise be redeemed from sin, that it have no dominion over him; he desires to be freed from death, that he may have his *conscience withall purged from dead works, to serve the living God*, Heb. 9. 14. He would have sin blotted out of an accusing conscience, that it may be purged out of the affections of the heart, & he would have his sins washed away for this end especially, that he may be *washed from his sins*, Rev. 1. 5. Now, as this is the great desire and design of such a heart, in which there is no guile, to have sin purified, and purged out of us, as well as pardoned, so there is a special eye and obligation upon God *our Father* by promise, not only to pardon sin, but to purge from sin, not only to cover it with the garment of *Christs righteousness*, and the breadth of his infinite love, but also, to cleanse it by his *Spirit*, effectually applying that blood to the purifying of the heart. Now where God hath bound himself voluntarily, and out of love, do not ye loose him by unbelief, for that will bind you into a prison: but labour to receive these gracious promises, and to take him bound as he offers. Believe, I say, that he will both forgive you, and in due time will cleanse your heart from the love and delight of sin; believe his promise, and engagement by promise to both, and this will see to a seal to his truth and faithfulness. There is nothing in God to affright a sinner, but his *justice*,
M 3 *holinesse*,

holinesse, and righteousness, but unto thee, who in the humble confession of thy sins, flies in to Jesus Christ, that very thing which did discourage thee, may now encourage thee, and imbolden thee to come, for he is just and faithful to forgive sins; his Justice being now satisfied, is engaged that way, to forgive, not to punish.

SERMON XX.

a Joh. I. 10. *If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.*

THERE is nothing in which Religion more consists, then in the true and unfeigned knowledge of our selves. The Heathens imposed that sentence, *gnoſci ſeipſos*, know thy self, descended from Heaven. It was indeed the Motto of the wisest and most religious amongst them; but certain it is, that the true and sincere understanding of our selves, descends from the Father of lights, and is a great gift as man is capable of, next to the knowledge of God himself. There is nothing more necessary to man, either as man, or as a Christian, either as indowed with reason, or professing Religion, then that he should be thoroughly acquainted with himself, his own heart, its dispositions, and inclinations,

clinations, and lusts, his wayes, and actions, that while he travels abroad to other creatures and Countreys, he may not commit so shameful an absurdity, as to be a stranger at home, where he ought to be best acquainted; Yet how sad is it, that this which is so absolutely needful, and universally profitable, should be lying under the manyest difficulties in the attainment of it? So that there is nothing harder, then to bring a man to a perfect understanding of himself, what a vile, naughty, and base creature he is, how defiled and desperately wicked his nature, how abominable his actions, in a word, what a compound of darknesse and wickednesse he is, a heap of defiled dust, and a masse of confusion, a sink of impiety and iniquity, even the best of mankind, those of the rarest and most refined extraction, take them at their best estate, thus they are as sepulchres painted without, and purrified within, outwardly adorned, and within full of rottennesse and corruption, *the imagination of his heart only evil continually.* Now, I say, here is the great businesse and labour of Religion, to bring a man to the clear discerning of his own nature, to represent unto him justly his own image, as it is painted in the Word of God, and presented in the glasse of the Law, and so by such a surprizing monstrous appearance, to affect his heart to self-aborrency in dust and ashes, and to have this representation, however unpleasant, yet most profitable, continually obversant to our minds,

minds, that we may not forget what manner of persons we are. Truly, I may say, if there be a perfection in this estate of imperfection, herein it consists; and if there be any attainment of a Christian, I account this the greatest, to be truly sensible of himself, and vile in his own eyes.

It was the custome of Philip King of Macedonia, after he had overcome the famous Republick of Greece, to have a young man to salute him first every morning with these words, *Philippe homo es, Philip thou art a man*, to the end that he might be daily minded of his mortality, and the unconstancy of humane affairs, lest he should be puffed up with his victory, and this was done before any could have access to speak with him, as if it were, to season and prepare him for the actions of the day; but O, how much more ought a Christian to train up his own heart, and accustome it this way, to be his continual remembrancer of himself, to suggest continually into his mind, and whisper this first into his ear in the morning, and mid day, and evening, *peccator es, thou art a sinner*, to hold our own image continually before us, in prayer, and praises, in restraints, in liberties of spirit, in religious actions, and in all our ordinary conversation, that it might season and season all our thoughts, words, and deeds, and keep them from that ordinary putrefaction and corruption of pride and self-conceit, which maketh all our ointment stink.

If we say we have no sin, we make him a liar.

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Why is this repeated again? but to shew unto us, even to you Christians, who believe in Christ, and are washen in his blood, how hard it is to know our selves aright. If we speak of the grosser sort of persons, they scarce know any sin, nor the nature and vilenesse of any that they know, therefore they live in security and peace, and blesse themselves in their own hearts, as if they had no sin; for such I say, I shall only say unto them, that your self-deceiving is not so subtil, but it may soon be discerned, your lie is grosse, and quickly seen through. But I would turn my self to you Christians, who are in some measure acquainted with your selves, yet there is something against you from this word; after ye have once got some peace from the challenge of sin, and hope of pardon, you many times fall out of acquaintance with your selves, having attained by the Lords grace, to some restraint of the more visible out-breakings of sin; you have not that occasion to know your selves by, and so you remain strangers to your hearts, and fall into better likeing with your selves, then the first sight of your selves permitted you. Now, my beloved in the Lord, herein you are to be blamed, that you do not rather go in to the fountain, and there behold the streams, then only to behold the fountain in the streams; you ought rather upon the Lords testimony of man, to believe what is in you, before you find it, and see it breaking out, and keep this character continually in your sight.

fight, which will be more powerful to humble you, then many out-breakings. I think we should be so well acquainted with our own natures, as to account nothing strange to them that we see abroad, but rather think all the grossness and wickedness of men suitable and correspondent to our spirits, to that root of bitterness that is in them; The goodness of God in restraining the appearance of that in us, which is within us in reality, should rather increase the sense of our own wickedness, then diminish it in our view.

Indeed, self-love is that which blinds us, and bemists us in the sight of our selves, we look upon our selves through this false *medium*, and it represents all things more beautiful then they are; and therefore the Apostle hath reason to say, *we deceive our selves, and we make God a liar.* O, how much practical *self-deceit* is there in the application of truth? there are many errors contrary to the truths themselves, and many deceivers, and deceived, who spread them: but I believe there is more error committed by men, in the application of truths to their own hearts, then in the contemplation of it; and more self-deceiving, then deceiving of others. It is strange to think, how sound, and clear, and distinct, a mans judgement will be against those evils in others, which yet he seeth not in himself; How many Christians will be able to decipher the nature of some vices, and unbowl the evils of them, and be quick-sighted

to eipie the least appearance of them in another; and so condemn it, and yet so partial are they in judging themselves, self-love so purblinds them in this reflection, that they cannot discern that in themselves, which others cannot but discern. How often do men declaim against pride, and covetousness, and self-seeking, and other evils of that kind? they will pour out a flood of eloquence and zeal against them, and yet so is strange they do not advert, that they are accusing themselves, and inspannelling themselves in such discourses, though others, it may be, will easily perceive, & predominancy of these evils in them. *Who art thou, O man, who judgeth another, and dost the same things? Canst thou escape Gods judgement?* Rom. 2. 1. Consider this, O Christian; that thou may learn to turn the edge of all thy censures and convictions against thy self, that thou may prevent all mens judgements of thee, in judging thy self. *all things, that men can judge thee, that is, a chief of sinners, that hath the root of all sin in thee; and so, thou may anticipate the divine judgement too; for if we judge our selves, we shall not be judged.* Labour thou to know these evils that are incident to thy nature, before others can know them; that is, in the root and fountain, before they come to the fruit and stream; to know sins in the first conceptions of them, before they come to such productions as are visible; and this shall keep thee humble, and preserve thee from much sin, and
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thou shalt not deceive thy self, nor dishonour God, in making him a liar, but rather set to thy seal to his truth, and his word shall abide in thee.

There is a common rule that we have in judging our selves, by comparing our selves amongst our selves, which (as Paul saith) is not wisdom, 2 Cor. 10. 12. When we do not measure our selves by the perfect rule of Gods holy Word, but parallel our selves with other persons, who are still defective from the rule, far further from it, then any one is from another: this is the ordinary method of the judging of self-love; we compare with the worst person, and if we be not so bad as they, we think our selves good; if not so ignorant as some are, we presume that we know; if not so prophane as many, we believe our selves religious. Lord, I am not as this Publican, so saith many in their hearts, there's a curser, a swearer, a drunkard, a blind ignorant soul, that neglects prayer in privat and publick, and upon these ruines of others sins, they build some better estimation of themselves. But, I pray you, what will that avail you to be unlike them, if you be more unlike your pattern, then they are unlike you? It may be, others will compare with these that are good, but it is with that which is worst in them, and not that which is best; How often do men reckon this way, here is a good man, here is an eminent person, yet he is such and such, subject to such infirmities, and here

here self-love flatters it self, and by flattering, deceives it self. My beloved, let us learn to establish a more perfect rule, which may shew all our imperfections: let our rule ascend, that our hearts may descend in humility, but when our rule and pattern descends to men of like infirmities, then our pride and self-conceit ascends, and the higher we be that way in our own account, the lower we are indeed, and in Gods account; and the lower we be in our selves, we lose nothing by it, for as God is higher in our account, so we are higher in Gods account, according to that standing rule, *Mat 23. 12. Who-soever shall exalt himself shall be abased, and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.*

SERMON XXI.

1 Joh. 2. 1. *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, &c,*

THE Gospel is an intire uniform piece, all the parts of it are interwoven through other, and interchangeably knit together; so that there can be no dividing of it, no more then of *Christs* coat that was without seam. If you have it not altogether by the divine lot, you cannot truly have

have any part of it, for they are so knit together, that if ye disjoyn them, you destroy them; and if they cease to be together, they cease altogether to be. I speak this, because there may be pretensions to some abstracted parts of Christianity; one man pretends to faith in *Iesus Christ*, and perswasion of pardon of sin, and in this there may be some secret glorying, arising from that confidence: another may pretend to the study of holinesse and obedience, and may indeavour something that way, to do known duties, and abstain from grosse sins. Now, I say, if the first do not conjoyn the study of the second, and, if the second do not lay down the first as the foundation, both of them imbrace a shadow for the thing it self; because they separat these things that God hath joyned; and so can have no being, but in mens fancy, when they are not conjoynd. He that would pretend to a righteousness of *Christ* without him, must withall study to have the righteousness of the Law fulfilled within him; and he that indeavours to have holinesse within, must withall go out of himself, to seek a righteousness without him, whereupon to build his peace and acceptance with *God*, or else, neither of them hath truly any righteousness without them, to cover them, or holinesse within, to cleanse them. Now here the beloved Apostle shews us this divine contexture of the Gospel, The grezt and comprehensive end and design of the Gospel is, peace in pardon of sin, and puri-

ty from sin: *These things I write unto you, that you sin not, &c.* The Gospel is comprised in commands and promises; both make one web, and link in together. The immediat end of the command is, *that we sin not*; nay, but there is another thing alwayes either exprelly added, or tacitly understood; *but if any man sin* (that desires not to sin) *we have an advocate with the Father*: so the promise comes in as a subsidiary help to all the precepts. It is annexed to give security to a poor soul from despair; and therefore the Apostle teacheth you a blessed Art of constructing all the commands and exhortations of the Gospel, those of the highest pitch, by supplying the full sense with this happy and seasonable caution or caveat, *but if any man sin, &c.* Doth that command, *Be ye holy as I am holy, perfect as your heavenly Father*, which sounds so much unattainable perfection, and seems to hold forth an inimitable pattern, doth it, I say, discourage thee? Then, use the Apostles Art, add this caution to the command, subjoyn this sweet exceptive, *But if any man* (that desires to be holy, and gives himself to this study) *fall often, and fall, and defile himself with unholinesse*, let him not despair, but know that *he hath an advocate with the Father*; If that of Pauls urge thee, *present your bodies a living sacrifice, and be ye not conformed to the world; but transformed, and glorifie God in your bodies and spirits which are his*, Rom. 12. 1, 2. and 1 Cor. 6. 12. And
cleanse

cleanse your selves from all filthinesse of the flesh and spirit, 2 Cor. 7. 1. And walk in the spirit, and walk as children of the light, &c. If these do too rigorously exact upon thee, so as to make thee lose thy peace, and weaken thy heart and hands; learn to make out a full sentence, and fill up the full sense and meaning of the Gospel, according as you see it done here. *But if any man,* (whose inward heart-desires, and chief designs are towards these things, who would think himself happy in holinesse and conformity to God, and estimats his blessednesse or misery from his union or separation from God) *sin, then we have an advocat with the Father, even Jesus Christ the righteous,* who hath all that we want, and will not suffer any accusation to be taken upon us, as long as he lives to make intercession for us.

On the other hand, take a view of the promises of the Gospel, though the immediat, and next end of them is, to give peace to troubled souls, and settle us in the high point of our acceptance with God, yet certainly, they have a further end, even purity from sin, as well as pardon of sin, cleansing from all sin and filthinesse, as well as covering of filthinesse. *These things I write unto you, that ye sin not;* What things? Consider what goes before, and what follows after, even the publication of the *Word of Life*, and *eternal life in him*, the declaration of our fellowship with God in Christ, the offering of the blood of

of Christ, able to cleanse all sin, the promise of pardon to the penitent, confession of sin, *all these things I write, that ye sin not*; so that this seems to be the ultimat end, and chief design of the Gospel, unto which all tends, unto which all work together: the promises are for peace, and peace is for purity; the promises are for faith, and faith is for purifying of the heart, and performing the precepts; so that, all at length returns to this, from whence while we swerv'd, all this misery is come upon us; In the beginning, it was thus, man created to glorifie God, by obedience to his blessed will, sin interposeth, and marreth the whole frame, and from this hath a flood of misery flowed in upon us: Well; the Gospel comes offering a *Saviour*, and forgiveness in him; thus peace is purchased, pardon granted, the soul is restored unto its primitive condition, and state of subordination to Gods will, and so redemption ends, where creation began, or rather in a more perfect frame of the same kind. The *second Adam* builds what the *first Adam* broke down, and the *Son* re-creates what the *Father* in the beginning created, yea, with some addition; in this new edition of mankind, all seems new; *new Heavens, and new Earth*, and that because the creature that was made old, and defiled with sin, is made new by grace. Now, hence you may learn the second part of this lesson, that the Apostle teacheth us; as ye ought to correct (as it were) precepts of the Gospel, by subjoyning

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promises

promises in this manner, to ye ought to direct promises, towards the performance of his precepts, as their chief end: whensoever you read it written, *The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin, if we confesse, he is faithful to forgive our sins.* God so loved the world, that he gave his Son: He that believeth hath everlasting life, &c. These make up the intire sense and meaning, after this manner, *These things are written, that we sin not.* Is there a redemption from wrath published? Is there reconciliation with God preached? And are we beseeched to come and have the benefit of them? Then say, and supply within thine own heart, *These things are written, published, and preached, that we may not sin.* Look to the furthest end of these things, it is, *that we sin not.* The end of things, the scope of writings, and the purpose of actions, is the very measure of them, and so that is the best interpreter of them. The scope of Scriptures, is by all accounted the very threed, that will lead a man right in and out of the labyrinths that are in it. And so it is used as the rule of the interpretation in the parts of it. Now, (my beloved in the Lord) take hence the scope of the whole Scriptures, the mark that all the Gospel shoots at, *These things I write unto you, that ye sin not.* You hear it is true, of pardon of sin, of delivery from wrath, of not coming into condemnation, of covering offences, of blotting them out as a cloud, all these you read and hear: But what do they all aim at? If you consider

consider not that attentively, you shall no more understand the plain Gospel, then you can expound a parable without observing the scope of it. Do you think these have no further aim, then to give you peace, and to secure you from fears and terrors, that you may then walk as you list, and follow the guiding of your own hearts? Nay, if you take it so, you totally mistake it, if you do not read on, and find all these things written to this end, *that we sin not, you erre, not understanding, or misunderstanding the Scriptures.*

These things I write unto you, little children: To enforce this the more sweetly, he useth this affectionate compellation, *little children*, for, in all things affection hath a mighty stroak, almost as much as reason; it is the most suitable way to prevaill with the spirit of a man, to deal in love and tendernesse with it; it insinuates more sweetly, and so can have lesse resistance, and therefore works more strongly. It is true, another way of terrors, threatnings, and reproofs mingled with sharp and heavy words of challenges, may make a great deal of more noise, and yet it hath not such vertue, to prevaill with a rational soul; the Spirit of the Lord was not in the wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire, but in the *still and calm voice*, which came to *Elijah, 1 King. 19. 11, 12.* These suit not the gentle dove-like disposition of the Spirit, and though they be fit to rent rocks in pieces, yet they cannot truly

break hearts, and make them contrite: The Sun will make a man sooner part with his cloak, then the wind; such is the difference between the warm beams of affection, and the boisterous violence of passion or terror. Now, O that there were such a spirit in them who preach the Gospel, such a fatherly affection, that with much pity and compassion they might call sinners from the wayes of death. O, there is no subject, in which a man may have more room for melting affections, nothing that will admit of such bowels of compassion as this, the multitude of souls passing to destruction, and so blind-folded, that they cannot see it. Here the fountain of tears might be opened to run abundantly: the Lord personats a tender-hearted Father or Husband often, *Oh, why will ye die? Ye have broken my heart with your whorish heart: O Jerusalem, how oft would I, but thou wouldst not?* When he, who is not subject to humane passions, expresseth himself thus, how much more doth it become us, poor creatures, to have pity on our fellow-creatures? Should it not presse out from us many groans, to see so many perishing, even beside salvation. I wish you would take it so, that the warning you to flee from the wrath to come, is the greatest act of favour and love that can be done to you. It becomes us to be solicitous about you, and declare unto you, that you will meet with destruction in those paths you walk in: that these wayes go down to the chambers of death.

death. O that it might be done with so much feeling compassion of your misery, as the necessity of it requires. But, why do many of you take it so hard to be thus forewarned, and have your danger declared unto you? I guesse at the reason of it; you are in a distemper, as sick children distempered in a fever, who are not capable to discern their parents tender affection, when it evolveth their own inclinations and wayes.

SERMON XXII.

1 Joh. 2. 1. My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, &c.

CHrist Jesus came by water and by blood, not by water only, but by blood also, and I add; not by blood only, but by water also, Chap 5. 6. In sin, there is the guilt, binding over to punishment, and there is the filth or spot, that defileth the soul in Gods sight: To take away guilt, nothing so fit as blood, for there is no punishment beyond blood, therefore saith the Apostle, without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin, Heb. 9. 22. and for the stain and spot, nothing is so suitable as water, for that is generally

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appointed

appointed for cleansing; and some Shadow of this the Heathens had, who had their lustrations in water, and their expiations by blood; but more significantly and plainly, the Jews, who had their purifications by sprinkling of water, *Numb. 8. 7.* and expiations by sacrificing of slain beasts; but all these were but *examining shadows*: now the substance is come, *Jesui Christ is come in water and blood*; in water, to cleanse the spots of the soul; to purifie it from all filthinesse; and in blood, to satisfy for sin, and remove the punishment. You have both in these words of the Apostle. *Not he labours to set out unto us the true Christ, whole and intirely These things I write unto you that ye sin not: this is the proper end of the water; and if any man sin, we have Christ a propitiation for our sins*, here is the blood, the end of the blood is, to save us, the end of the water is, that we sin not, since we are saved. He came in the blood of expiation, because we had sinned; he came in the water of sanctification, that we might not sin. His blood speaks peace to the soul, and the water subjoyns, *but let them not return to folly*. His blood cryes, *Behold thou art made whole*, and the water echoes unto it, *sin no more, lest a worse thing befall thee*, *Joh. 5. 14.* These two streams of water and blood, which are appointed for purity and pardon, run intermingled all along, and so the proper effects of them are interchangeably attributed to either of them, *be bath*

hath washed us in his blood, Rev. 1. 5. and 7. 14. And the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin. Then certainly, this blood cannot be without water, it is never separated from it, the proper effect of blood is to cover sin, but because the water runs in that channel, and is conveyed by the blood thither, therefore it doth cleanse sin, as well as cover it.

These things I write unto you, that ye sin not; This then is the design of the whole Gospel, the great and grand design, to destroy sin, and save the sinner. There is a treaty of peace made with the sinner, and Christ is the peace-maker: a tender of life and salvation is made to him, but there is no treaty, no capitulation, or composition with sin, out it must go, first out of its dominion, then out of its habitation; it must first lose its power, and then its being in a believers; yea, this is one of the chief articles of our peace, not only required of us as our duty, that we should destroy that, which cannot but destroy us; (for, if any man will needs hug and embrace his sins, and cannot part with them, he must needs die in their imbracements, because the Council of Heaven hath irrevocably past a fatal sentence against sin, as the only thing that in all the Creation hath the most perfect opposition to his blessed will, and contrariety to his holy nature) but also and especially, as the great stipulation and promise upon his part, to redeem us from all our iniquities, and purifie us to himself,

self, a people zealous of good works; and not only to redeem us from hell, and deliver us from wrath, Tit. 2. 14. He hath undertaken this great work, to compesce this mutiny and rebellion that was raised up in the Creation by sin, till what peace could be between God and us, as long as his enemy and ours dwelt in our bosome, and we at peace with it.

Now, take a short view of these things, which are written in the preceeding Chapter, and you shall see that the harmonious voice of all that is in the Gospel, is this, that we sin not. Let me say further, as these things are written that we sin not, so all things are done that we sin not. Take all the whole work of Creation, of Providence, of Redemption, all of them speak one language, that we sin not; Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge: There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard, Psal. 19. 2, 3. And, as in that place, their voice proclaims the Glory, Majesty, and Goodness of God, so they with the same sound, proclaim and declare, that we should not sin against such a God, so great, and so good; all that we see, suggests and insinuates this unto our hearts; all that we hear, whispers this unto our ears, that we sin not; That he made us, and not we our selves, and that we are the very work of his hands, this speaks our absolute and essential dependence on him, and therefore proclaims with a loud voice, that sin, which would cut off this subordination, and
loose

loose from this dependence upon his holy will, is a monstrous unnatural thing. Take all his mercies towards us; whether general or particular, the transcendent abundance of his infinit goodness, in the earth, that river of his riches that runs through it, to water every man, and brings supply to his doors, that infinit variety that is in Heaven and Earth, and all of them of equal birth-right with man, yet by the Law of our Maker, a yoke of subjection and service to man is imposed upon them, so that man is, in a manner, set in the Center of all, to the end that all the several qualifications, and perfections that are in every creature, may concenter and meet together in him, and flow towards him. Look upon all his particular acts of care and favour towards thee, consider his judgments upon the world, upon the nation, or thine own person, put to thine ear, and hear, this is the joynt harmonious melody, this is the proclamation of all, *that we sin not, that we sin not against so good a God, and so great a God, that were wickednesse, this were madnesse.* If he wound, it is *that we sin not*; if he heal again, it is *that we sin not*. Doth he kill, it is *that we sin not*. Doth he make alive, it is for the same end. Doth he shut up and restrain our liberty, either by bondage, or sicknesse, or other afflictions, why? he means *that we sin not*. Doth he open again, he means the same thing, *that we sin no more, lest a worse thing befall us.* Doth he make many to fall in battel,

batell, and turns the fury of that upon us, the voice of it is, that you who are left behind, should sin no more. Is there severity towards others, and towards you clemency; O, the loud noise of that is, sin not. But alas, the result of all is, that which is written, Psal. 78. 52. *Nevertheless they sinned still.* In the midst of so many concurring testimonies, in the very throng of all the sounds and voices that all the works of God utter, in the very hearing of these, nevertheless to sin still, and not to return and enquire early after God, this is the plague and judgment of the Nation.

But let us return to the words, *These things, &c. That which is written of the word of life, that which was from the beginning, and was manifested unto us, that is written that we sin not.* For, saith this same Apostle, Chap. 3. 5. 8. *And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins, and in him is no sin; yea, for this very purpose (saith he) that he might destroy the works of the devil.* Now, is this the great businesse, that drew the Son out of the Fathers bosome, to destroy the arch-enemy, and capital rebell, Sin, which, as to man, is a work of Satans, because it first entered in man by the Devils suggestion and counsel: all that misery and ruine, all these works of darknesse and death, that Satan had by his malice and policy wrought upon, and in poor mankind, *Jesus was manifested in the flesh without sin, to destroy and take away sin out of our flesh, and to abolish*

Ver. 1. *the 1. Epistle of John.* 283

ish and destroy Satans work, which he had build-
ed upon the ruines of Gods work, of the image
of God, and to repair and renew that first bless-
ed work of God in man, Eph. 4. 23, 24.

Now, O how cogent and perswading is this,
one so high, come down so low, one dwelling in
inaccessible glory, manifested in the flesh, in the
infirmitie and weaknesse of it, to this very pur-
pose, to repair the Creation, to make up the
breaches of it, to destroy sin, and save the sinners;
what force is in this to perswade a soul that true-
ly believes it, not to sin? for, may he think with-
in himself, Shall I have that which Christ came to
destroy? Shall I fortify and maintain that which
he came to take away, and do what in me lyes to
frustrate the great end of his glorious and won-
derful descent from Heaven? Shall I joyn hands,
and associate with my Ruins, and war for them,
~~which war against my soul,~~ and him that would
save my soul? Nay, let us conclude (my beloved)
within our own hearts, Is the Word and Prince
of life manifested from Heaven, and come to
make and unmake that work of Satan, that he
may rescue me from under his tyranny? then God
forbid that I should help Satan to build up that
which my Saviour is casting down, and to make
a prison for my self, and cords to bind me in it
for everlasting. Nay, will a believing soul say,
rather let me be a *worker together with Christ,*
though faintly, yet I resolve to wrestle with him,
to pull down all the strong holds that Satan keeps
in

in my nature, and so to congratulate and content
to him, who is the avenger and asserter of my
liberty.

Then consider the greatest end, and furthest
design of the Gospel, how it is inseparably chain-
ed and linked into this, *that we sin not*. We are
called to fellowship with the Father and the Son,
and herein is his glory, and our happiness. Now,
this proclaims with a loud voice, *that we sin not*,
for, what more contrary to that design of uni-
on, and communion with God, than to sin,
which disunites and discommunicates the soul from
God. The nature of sin you know, *it is the trans-
gression of his Law*, and so, it is the very just op-
position of the creatures will, to the will of him
that made it. Now, how do ye imagine that
this can consist with true friendship and fellow-
ship, which looseth that conjunction of wills and
affections, which is the bond of true friendship,
and the ground of fellowship, *idem velle, atque
idem nolle, hoc demum vera amicitia est*. The
conspiracy of our desires and delights in one
point with Gods, this sweet co-incidency makes
our communion, and what communion then
with God, when that which his soul abhors, is
your delight, and his delight is not your desire?
What communion hath light with darknesse? Sin
is darknesse, all sin, but especially, sin intertain-
ed and maintained, sin that hath the full consent
of the heart, and carrieth the whole man after
it, that is Egyptian darknesse, an universal dark-
nesse

ness over the soul; this being interposed between God and the soul, breaks off communion, eclipses that soul totally. Therefore, (my beloved) if you do believe that you are called unto this high dignity of fellowship with God, and if your souls be stirred with some holy ambition alter it, consider that *these things are written, that ye sin not*; consider what baseness is in it, for one that hath such a noble design; as fellowship with the highest, to debase his soul so far, and so low, as to serve sinful and fleshly lusts; there is a vileness and wretchedness in the service of sin, that any soul, truly and nobly principled, cannot but look upon it with indignation, because he can behold nothing but indignity in it. Shall I who am a Ruler (saith Nebemiah) shall such a man as I flee? and who is there that being as I am would flee? Neh. 6. 11. A Christian hath more reason, Shall such a man as I, who am born again to such a hope, and called to such a high dignity? Shall I, who aim and aspire so high as fellowship with God, debase and degrade my self with the vilest servitude? Shall I defile in that puddle again, till my own cloaths abhor me, who aims at so pure and so holy a society? Shall I yoke in my self with drunkards, liars, swearers, and other slaves of sin? Shall I rank my self thus, and conform my self to the world, seeing there is a noble and glorious society to incorporate with, the King of kings to converse with daily? Alas, what are these worms that sit on Thrones to him?

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But far more, how base are these companions in iniquity, your Pot-companions? &c. And what a vile society is it, like that of the bottomlesse pit, where Devils are linked together in chains?

SERMON XXIII.

1 Joh. 2. 1. *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, &c.*

IN the Gospel we have the most perfect provision against both these extremities, that souls are ready to run upon, the rock of desperate distrust, and the quick-sands of presumptuous wantonnesse. It may be said to be a well ordered Covenant in all things, that hath caveated and cautioned the whole matter of our salvation, in such a way, that there is neither place for discouragement and down-casting, nor yet room for liberty in sin; there is no exemption from the obligation of Gods holy Law, and yet there is pardon for the breach of it, and exemption from the curse; there is no peace, no capitulation with sin, and yet there is peace concluded with the sinner, who is, by that agreement, bound to fall out with sin; there is no dispensation for sin, and from the perfection of holinesse, and yet there is an advocacy for the sinner, which aims
and

and studies after it ; so that in sum, the whole Gospel is comprised in this, *he speaks peace to his saints, but let them not return so folly ; they are made whole, sin no more ;* All that is in the Gospel saith this, *that thou should sin no more.* But, because sin is necessarily incident, therefore all that is in the Gospel, speaks this further, though ye be surprized in sin, yet believe ; and this is the round that a believer is to walk in ; to turn from pardon to purity, and from pollution again to pardon ; for these voices and sounds are interchanged continually ; *If ye have sinned, believe in Christ the advocate and sacrifice, and, because ye have believed, sin not ; but if ye be overtaken in sin, yet believe ;* and as this is daily renewed, so the soules study and indeavour in them, should be daily renewed too. If ye have sinned, despair not ; if ye be pardoned, yet presume not : after sin there is hope, it is true, because *there is forgiveness with him ;* but after forgiveness, there must be fear to offend his goodness ; for *there is forgiveness with him, that he may be feared,* Psal. 130. 4. And this is the situation I would desire my soul into, to be placed between hope of his mercy, and fear of sin, the faith of his favour, and the hatred of sin, which he will not favour ; and how happy were a soul to be confined within these, and kept captive to its true liberty ?

I spake a little before, how these fundamental truths that are set down before, do all aim at this

one

one mark, *that we sin not* ; Now I proceed. That declaration what God is, *vers. 5.* is expressly directed to this purpose, and applyed, *vers. 6.* *God is light* , and therefore *sin not*, for sin is darknesse, *be is light* , for purity and beauty of holinesse, and perfection of knowledge , that *true light in which is no darknesse*, that unmixt light , all homogeneous to it self, therefore *sin not* , for that is a work of the night, and of the darknesse, that proceeds from the blindnesse and estrangement of your minds, and ignorance of your hearts, and it cannot but prepare and fit you for these everlasting chains of darknesse. Call God what you will, name all his names, styles, and titles, spell all the characters of it, and still you may find it written at every one of them, *sin not* ; Is *he light* ? then *sin not*. Is *he life* ? then *sin not* : for sin will separat you from his light and life, sin will darken your souls, and kill them. Is *he love* ? then *sin not* ; *God is love* (saith *John*) O then *sin not* against love. Hatred of any good thing is deformed, but the hatred of the beautiful image of the original love, that is monstrous : *God is love*, and in his love is your life and light ; then to sin against him, it is not simple disobedience, nor is it only grosser rebellion, but it hath that abominable stain of ingratitude in it. Do you read, that it is written, *be is holy*, then *sin not*, for this is most repugnant to his holinesse, *his holy eyes cannot see it*. Therefore if thou would have him look upon thee with favour,

your, thou muſt not look upon ſin with favour, or intertain it with delight ; Is it written that he is great and powerful ? then ſin not, that were madneſſe. Is it written, that he is good and gracious ? then it is written, that ye ſin not ; for that were wickedneſſe : it were an unſpeakable folly and madneſſe, to offend ſo great a God, that can ſo eaſily avenge himſelf ; and it were abominable perverſineſſe and wickedneſſe, to ſin againſt ſo good and gracious a God, who, though he may avenge himſelf, yet offers pardon and peace, and beſeecheth us to accept it. Is he juſt ? then ſin not ; for he will not acquit the wicked, nor hold them guiltleſſe, them, who do acquit themſelves, and yet hold by their ſins. And is he merciful ? then, O then, ſin not, becauſe he hath acquitted thee, becauſe he is ready to blot out thy guilt ; wilt thou ſin againſt mercy, that muſt ſave thee ? Again, is it written, that the blood of Jeſus Chriſt cleanſeth from all ſin ? that is written, that ye ſin not. It is true, it is written, becauſe ye have ſinned already, that ye may know how it may be pardoned. But moreover it is written, that ye ſin no more, that ſo, more ſin may be prevented, at leaſt, deliberat continued walking in ſin ; ſo that this blood hath a twofold vertus and uſe ; To be the greateſt encouragement to a ſoul troubled for ſin, and the chiefeſt argument and inducement for a ſoul not to ſin : this medicine, or this plaſter, hath two notable vertues, reſtorative, and preſervative, to reſtore the bones.

Bones that already are broken, through falling in sin; and to preserve our feet from further falling in sin. It hath a healing vertue, for these bruises that are in the soul; and besides, it is an antidot and soveraign preservative against the poyson and infection of sin and the world. What motive is like this, the Son of God shed his blood for our sins, they cost a dear price, O, how precious was the ransome? More precious then Gold, and Silver, and precious Stones, because the redemption of the soul is so precious, that it would have ceased for ever without it. Now, what soul can deliberately think of this, and receive it with any affection into the heart, but he shall find the most vehement perswasion against sin; he cannot but behold the hainousnesse and infinit evil that is in it, which required such an infinit recompence? And can a soul on that view run to the puddle and defile again, when he sees how dearly the fountain for cleansing was purchased? Can a believing heart have such treacherous thoughts harboured within him, to crucifie afresh the Lord of glory, and, as it were, to trample under foot his blood? No certainly, he that believes in this blood, cannot use it so dishonourably and basely; As it is written, That he sin not, so he reads it, and believes it, that he may not sin, as well as because he hath sinned. Many speak of this blood, and think they apply it to the cleansing of their sin past, but it is rather that they may sin with more liberty, as if the end of vomiting up a surfeit

felt of sin, were to surfeit more; and the end of
wasting, were nothing else but to defile again.
Certainly, this blood is not for such souls, not
one word of comfort in the *Word*, not one drop
of hope in the blood, to them who pretend to
believe in *Christs blood*, and continue in sin, as
fresh and lively as ever they did, nothing abated
of their desires, or customs. But if we confesse
our sins, God will forgive (say you) and this
we may do at any time, and this we do daily.
Nay, but (saith *John*) *this is written that you*
sin not; not to incourage you to sin. It is not
recorded for this end, that you may live after
your own imaginations and former customs, with
security and peace, upon this presumption, that
pardon is easily procurable, if I say, *God have mer-*
cy upon me, ere I die. Do not deceive your
selves, for it is written for the just contrary, *that*
you sin no more, and return no more to folly. If
he had said, if we sin, though we confesse, yet he
is just to punish us, you would then be driven to
desperation, and from that, to a desperat con-
clusion, since we must be punished however, let
us not punish our selves here, in mortifying our
flesh; *Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we*
shall die: Die we must, let us deserve it; for
where there is no hope, there is no help for re-
formation. But now, when there is such an un-
expected proposall of grace, when God who is free
to punish us, becomes indebted by his promise
to forgive our debts, we humbly submitting to

him, and confessing our guiltinesse, this surprisal of clemency and moderation, should, yea, certainly will overcome any heart that truly believes it, and conquer it to his love and obedience. The more easily he forgive sin, the more hardly will a believing heart be drawn to sin. You know any ingenuous spirit will more easily be conquered by kindnesse and condescendency, then severity and violence; these *cords of love*, are the *cords of a man*, suited to the nature of man in whom there is any sparkle of ingenuity remaining; how often have men been engaged and overcome by clemency and goodness, who could not be conquered by force of arms? Enemies have been made friends by this means, such power is in it, to knit hearts together. *Augustus*, when he was acquainted with the conspiracy of one of his chief Minions *Cinna*, whom he had made a friend of an enemy, by kindnesse and courtesie, takes the same way, to make of a traitor a constant friend; he doth not punish him, as he had done others, but calls for him, and declares unto him his vile ingratitude, that when he had given him life and liberty, he should conspire to take away his Princes life; well, when he is confounded and astonished, and cannot open his mouth, saith *Augustus*, I give thee thy life again, first an open enemy, and now a traitor; yet from this day, let an inviolable friendship be bound up between us, and so it proved: for this way of dealing did totally overcome his heart, and blot out

out all seditious thoughts. But O, how incomparably greater is his condescendency and clemency, whose Person is so high and sacred, whose Laws are so just and holy, and we so base and wretched, to pardon such infinit guilt, rebellion, and treachery, against such an infinit Majesty, and that, when a soul doth but begin to blush, and be ashamed with it self, and cannot open its mouth; I say, this rare and unparallel'd goodnesse and mercy being considered, cannot but tame and daunt the wildest and most savage nature; wilde beasts are not brought in subjection and tamed, but by gentle usage; it is not fiercenesse and violence can cure their fierceness, but meekness, and condescendency, to follow their humours, and soft dealing with them; as a rod is not bowed by great strength, but broken, even so, these things, of the promise of pardon for sin, of the grace and readinesse of God to pardon upon the easiest terms, are written for this end, that our wilde and undaunted natures may be tamed, and may bow and submit willingly to the yoke of his obedience, and may henceforth knit such a sacred bond of friendship and fellowship with God, as may never be broken.

But, say ye, who is he that sins not? *Who can say, my heart is pure, and my way is clean? Who can say, I have no sin?* And therefore that cannot be expected which you crave. Nay, but saith the Apostle, *These things I write unto you,*

that ye sin not. Because sin is in all, therefore you excuse your self in your sins, and takes liberty to sin; but the very contrary, is the intent of the declaring unto us that we have sin; he shews that none want it, not that ye may be the more indulgent towards it, but the more watchful against it. It is not to make you secure, but rather to give you alarm; even the best and holiest, it is an alarm to them, to tell them that sin is in *confinitis*, in their very borders; that the enemy is even in their quarters, yea, in their bosome; Certainly, this should so much the more excite us against it, and arm us for it every moment, lest either by fraud, or force, by secret undermining, or open violence, it draw us away from God. This word, *If we say we have no sin, we lie*: It is a watchword given to men, a warning to enter in consideration of themselves, for the enemy being within, there is no flying from him, we carry him about with us, and being within, he is lesse discerned; and therefore we ought to awake, and so walk *circumspectly*, with eyes in our head, lest we be surprized at unawares, either in that time we know not of, or at that place we least suspect. And to others of you, who have never attained any victory over your sins, and scarce have a discerning of them; I would only say this, that the universality of sins inhabitation, or being in all men, even the godly, will not excuse sins domination and reign in you. It is
strange,

strange, that since the holiest have need of continual watching against this bosome enemy, that ye who have both little knowledge and strength, should think ye may live securely, and not trouble your selves. If they have need to take heed, how much more have ye, since it is but in them, but it reigns in you.

SERMON XXIV.

1 Joh. 2. 1. — *And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, &c.*

There is here a sad supposition, but too certain, that any man may sin, yea, that all men will sin, even those who have most communion with God, and interest in the blood of Christ, yet they are not altogether exempted from this fatal lot of mankind, it is incident even to them to sin, and too frequently incident; but yet we have a happy and sweet provision, for indemnity from the hazard of sin: *We have an advocate with the Father.* Grant the probability, yea, the necessity and certainty of that supposal, *If any man do sin*, yet there is as much certainty of indemnity from sin, as of necessity of falling into sin. It is not more sure, that we shall carry about with us matter of sorrow and mourning; but that it is as sure, that we

we have alwayes without us, matter of rejoycing.

Let me then speak a word to these particulars : First, that sin is incident to the best, even after all perswasions, convictions, resolutions, desires, and designs to avoid sin. Next, that it is usual for sins after mercy, conviction, and resolution to appear so hainous, that they may seem to over-top the mercy of God, and the merits of *Christ*; a soul is most apt to be troubled with guilt contracted after pardon, and a desire of purity. But withall, I would in the last place represent to you; that there is no ground of despair, or discouragement for such an one, though there be ground of humiliation and mourning; there is a provision made in the Gospel against these continually incident fears, there is a security against the hazard of surprizing sins, and that this comfort belongs only to such souls, as unfeignedly desire not to sin, and are in some measure perswaded by the grace of God not to sin; not to them who willingly give up themselves to their own lusts. It is a common doctrine as any, that sin hath some lodging in every mans heart and flesh, and is not totally cast out, but only bound with chains within, that it do not exercise its old dominion over a believer. But I fear, the most common truths, though they be most substantial in themselves, yet are but circumstantial in our apprehensions, and very rarely and extraordinarily have place in the deep-

er and more serious thoughts of our hearts: they are commonly confessed, it is true, but as seldom considered, I am sure; for who did truly ponder the inclinableness of our nature to sin, the strong propension of the heart to evil, the deceitfulness of sin it self, and the many circumstantial helps, and additions it gets to its strength, but he would stand in awe, and watch seriously over himself. I dar say, many sin, rather because of a misapprehended immunity from it, and a misse-reckoning of their own measure and strength, then because of the strength of sin it self. I know no one thing makes sin so strong as this, that we do not apprehend our own weakness, and so give over watchfulness, which is the greatest and best part of our armour of defence, when it is done in faith, and this watch kept on the Tower of the Lords Promises; The apprehension of our escaping the pollutions of the world, and of some strength to resist them, this adds no more strength to us, but diminisheth and taketh from our vigilancy, and so exposeth us, as it were, naked and secure, to the cruelty of our adversary. I would wish every Christian to be thoroughly acquainted, and often conversant in two Books of Sophistry, I may so term them, *the deceitfulness of his own heart,* and *the deceivableness of sin,* Jer. 15. and Heb. 3. 13. These are the Volumns he would daily turn over, to learn to discern the Sophistifications, self-flatteries, blindness, darkness, and selfe

self-love of his own heart; to take off the deceiving mask of pretences and appearances of good, and behold sensibly the true and real inclinations of the heart to wickednesse, to passion, pride, uncleannesse, malice, envy, and all these affections of the flesh: to find out the true beating of the pulse of the heart; and indeed this just discerning and discovery of the thief in the soul, is a great part of his arraignment; for if sin ly under the view of an eye that hates it, and loves God, much of its power and vertue, which lay in darknesse, is taken away. I presse this the more, because I verily apprehend it to be the plague of many Christians, who have some general insight into the matter of good and evil, and espy some more gross corruption in themselves, and have some affection to good, yet this estrangednesse to our own hearts, and the vein or strain of them, the not unbowelling of our hidden affections, and not discerning of the poyson of pride, self-love, love of the world, and such like lusts, which are intermingled in all that we do, and spread, as it were, universally through the whole man; this, I say, makes most of us be subject to so many surprisals by sin; we are often routed before we draw up, and often conquered ere we consider: this makes us such unproficients in mortification, so that scarce any sin is killed, while the roots of all sin lyes hid under the ground from us. Then withal, I desire you to study how deceivable a thing sin is, how many deceitful

ceitful fair pretences it is covered with, it hath the voice of Jacob, but the hands of Esau; look what it is that is pleasant or suitable to our natural spirits, it insinuates it self alwayes under the shadow of that, and if there be not much heedfulness and attention, and much experience of the wiles of that subtil one, it is a great hazard to be caught with it unadvisedly, while we clasp about another thing, which is presented as a bait and allurements. Now, is it any wonder that a poor soul be drawn to sin often, when our enemy doth not for the most part proſesse hostility, but friendship, and under that colour pleads admission, within our Ports; and besides, we have a treacherous friend in our bosome, that betrayes us into his hands, that is, our own deceitful hearts: These things I mention, to put you in remembrance of what condition you are in, in this world, and what posture you should be into; watch, (I say) and when ye have done all, stand with your loins girt; and though you cannot possibly escape all sin, yet certainly it is not in vain thus to set against it, and keep a watch over it, for by this means you shall escape more sin, and sin lesse; as he that aims at the mark, though he do not hit it, yet he shall ordinarily come nearer it, then he that shoots only at randome; & as the Army that is most vigilant and watchful, though they cannot prevent all losses and hazards, yet commonly they are not found at such a losse, as those who are proud, confident, and secure.

Now,

Now, as it is supposed, that sin is ordinarily incident to the child of God, so it is especially to be caveated, that he despair not in his sins, for it is imported in this provision, that the believer is in great hazard upon new lapses into sin, either of daily incurſion, or of a groſſer nature, to be discouraged; As there is ſo much corruption in any mans heart, as will *turn the grace of God into wantonneſſe*, and incline him upon the propoſal of free grace, to preſume to take liberty to the fleſh, ſo, that ſame corruption upon another occaſion, works another way, upon the ſuppoſal of new ſins, aggravated with preceeding mercy and grace in God, and convictions and reſolutions in him, to drive him into deſpondency, and dejection of ſpirit, as if there were no pardon for ſuch ſins. And indeed, it is no wonder if the ſoul be thus ſet upon, if we ſet aſide the conſideration of the infinite grace of God, that far ſurpaſſeth the ill deſerts of men. To ſpeak of the very nature of the thing it ſelf, there is no ſin in its own nature more unpardonable, then ſin after pardon; nothing ſo hainous, aggravated with ſo many high circumſtances, which mingleth it with the worſt ingredients, as this ſin, after ſo much grace revealed in the Goſpel, to the end that we may not ſin. Sins waſhed ſo freely, in ſo precious a fountain, and yet to deſile again; ſins forgiven ſo readily, and eaſily, the debt whereof, in Juſtice the whole creation was not able to pay, and yet, to offend ſo
gracious

gracious a Father; a soul being thoroughly convinced of the vanity, folly, and madnesse of sin, of the deceitfulness and balennesse of its pleasures, and set in a posture against it, as the most deadly enemy, and yet after all this, to be soiled, deceived, and insnared; Here, I say, are very piercing considerations, which cannot but set the challenge very deep into the heart of a Christian, and wound him sore; how will he be filled with shame and confusion of face, if he look upon God? every look or beam of whose countenance, represents into the soul the vilest and most abominable visage of sin; or if he look into himself, there is nothing but self-condemning there, he finds his own conscience staring him, as a thousand witnesses; thus the soul of a believer being environed, he is ready to apprehend, that though God should have pardoned the sins of his ignorance, yet that there is more difficulty in this, to pardon his returnings to folly, and therefore are some put to harder exercise, and greater terrours after conversion, then in the time of it; the sins of ignorance being, as it were, removed as a cloud, and scored out in a heep, but the sins of knowledge after mercy, lying more distinctly and clearly in the view of the soul; it is more difficult to blot them out of the conscience, and sprinkle the heart from an evil conscience: These things I speak to you for this reason, that you may be affraid to sin. I suppose that there is no hazard of eternal damnation

nation by sin, grant that you know before-hand, that if you sin, there is yet forgiveness with him, and there is no hazard of perishing by it; yet, sure I am, it is the most foolish adventure in the world, to take liberty on that account, for though there be indemnity that way, as to thy eternal estate, yet I am perswaded, that there is more damage another way, in thy spiritual estate in this world, then all the gains of sin can countervail: There is a necessary losse of peace, and joy, and communion of the *Holy Ghost*; it is inevitable in the very ordinary and natural course and connexion of things, but that sin, that way indulged, will eclipse thy soul, and bring some darknesse of sorrow, and horreur over it; to speak after the manner of man, and in the way of reason it self, the intertainment of that which God hates, will deprive thee of more solid joy and sweetnesse in him, then all the pleasures of sin could afford. Therefore I dare not say to you (as one too unadvisedly expresth it) *Fear not, though you do sin, of any hurt that can come by these sins, for if you sin, it shall do you no hurt at all*: I say, this were indeed but to make you too bold with sin. I had rather represent unto you, that though ye be secured in your eternal estate, and there can come no condemnation that way, yet there is much hurt comes by sin, even in this world, and sure, I think it a very rational and Christian inducement, to prevail with a Christian not to sin, to tell him that he shall

shall make a foolish bargain by it, for he shall lose much more then he can gain. Is there no hurt or losse incident to men, but eternal perdition? Nay, my beloved, there is a losse Christians may sustain by sinning freely, which all the combined advantages of sin cannot compensate; Is not one hours communion with God, is not the peace of your own consciences, and the joy of the Spirit, such inestimable Jewels, that it were more suitable for a man to sell the world, and buy them, then to sell them, and buy a poor momentary trifling contentment, which hath a sting in the tail of it, and leaves nothing but vexation after it? *O these bruises in Davids bones, these breaches in his spirit, that losse of the joy of his salvation!* Let these teach you who are escaped the great hurt of sin, to fear at least to be hurt by it this way, more then ever you can expect to be helped by it.

But then, I desire to add this in the third place, that there is provision made against the discouragement of these souls that desire not to sin, and yet sin against their desire. If the challenge I spoke of, be written in thy conscience, as it were with the point of a Diamond, deeply ingraven; yet my beloved, consider, *that if any man sin, we have an advocate, &c.* There is an expresse caution against thy discouragement; certainly our Saviour hath provided for it, since the case is so incident, and the supposition so ordinary, it is not conceivable that he hath not caveated

caveated and secured thy salvation in such cases: for he knew certainly before he pardoned thee, and visited thee at first, that thou wast to be subject unto this necessary burden of sin, and that it would often times molest and trouble you, and sometimes prevail over you; all this he knew, that when ye should order your forces, and draw out against sin, with the greatest desire and resolution, that yet you might be soiled unexpectedly; and this was not unknown to him, when he shewed mercy at first; therefore, since his love is unchangeable, and his wisdom (being infinite,) saith it should be so, he would never have cast his love on such persons, if these things which were then before him, could make him change. Now, I grant there is more wonder in the pardon of following sins, then in the first pardon, and therefore you should still love more, and praise more; but what is this wonder, to the wonder of his grace? it is swallowed up in that higher wonder, *For his thoughts and wayes are not like ours,* his voice is, *Return thou back-sliding sinner to thy first Husband, though thou hast played the harlot.* Therefore, I desire that whatsoever be presented in that kind, to aggravate your sins, let it humble you more indeed, and make you hate sin, but let it not hinder you to think as highly of his mercy and grace, and to set that in the Heavens above it.

S E R M O N X X V.

1 Joh. 2. 1. — *And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, &c.*

IT is the natural office of the conscience to accuse a man in evil doing, as every man by sin is lyable to the judgment of the supream Court of Heaven, so he is likewise subject to the inferior Court of his own Conscience; for the *most high God* hath a Deputy within every mans breast, that not only is a Witness, but a Judge, to fasten an accusation, and pronounce a sentence upon him according to the Law of God. And while it is so, that a man is accused in both Courts, at the supream Tribunal, and the lower House of a mans own Conscience, when mans accuser is within him, and *God his righteous Judge* above him, Who can come in to plead such a mans cause? A person self-condemned, who shall plead for his absolution? If he cannot but accuse himself, and stop his mouth, being guilty before God of the transgressions of all his Law, then what place for an advocate to excuse him, or defend his cause? And who is it that can enter in the lists with God, who, because the supream and highest Judge, must be both Judge and Party? Where shall a *dayes-man* be found to lay his hands on both, and advocate the desperat. like cause of sinners? Truly here we had been at an

eternal stand, and here had the businesse stuck for ever, for any thing that the Creation could imagine, had not the *infinite grace and wisdom* of God opened themselves to mankind, in opening a door of hope to broken and out-law sinners; and behold, here is the provision is made for the security and salvation of lost souls, *there is One able and mighty to save*, a person found out fit for this advocacy, who taketh the broken cause of sinners in hand, and pleads it out, and makes out Justice to be for them, and not against them, *If any man sin, we have an advocate, &c.*

There is one thing imported, that sin maketh a man liable to a charge and accusation, and brings him under the hazard of judgment. Indeed, its hard enough to endure an accusing conscience, and a spirit wounded with the apprehension of wrath; When our *Saviour* would expresse great affliction, he doth it thus, *A mans enemies shall be those of his own house.* If a domestick enemy be so ill, what shall a bosome-enemy be, when a mans accuser is not only beside him, but within him, not only in the house with him, but in the field too, carried about with him whithersoever he goeth, so that he can have no retiring or withdrawing place from it. Indeed, some poor souls make a mad escape from under the challenge of their consciences, they get away from their keepers to more excess in sin; or make some vain diversion to company, and other things of the world, but the

end thereof shall be more bitterneſſe, for that will not ſlill ſleep within them, but ſhall awake upon them with more terrour, and one day put them in ſuch a poſture, that all the comforts of the world ſhall be but as a drop of water to a man in a burning fever, or as oyl to a flame. But, as I told you, that is not the greateſt matter, to be ſelf-accuſed, and ſelf-condemned, if there were not a higher Tribunal, which this proceſſe originally flows from, *one greater then the conſcience*, who ſpeaks to us in his Word, and hath written his charge and ſentence againſt us, and this is it which ſets the ſoul moſt on edge, and it is but the very apprehenſion of that higher judgment, which is the gall and wormwood, the poiſon of theſe challenges in the conſcience. I would deſire you to look upon this, and conſider that there is a ſentence paſt in the Word of God upon all your actions, that the wrath of God is revealed in the Scriptures as due to you, however you may flatter your ſelves in your ſins, and fancy an immunity from wrath, though you live in ſin: I wiſh ye were once perſwaded of this, that all ſinners muſt once appear before Gods Tribunal, and hear the righteous ſentence of the dueneſſe of puniſhment prononced; I ſay, all muſt once appear, either to hear and believe it, or to ſee it executed; the wiſdom of God requires, that all mens guilt, which is a *transgreſſion of the Law*, ſhould once come to a judicial tryal, and deciſion by the Law; and either this

must be done in your own consciences here, that ye may list yourselves before him, and take with your sins, and humble your selves in his sight, and then the matter is put over upon a Mediator, or else you must give him leave, may, he will take leave to cite you to appear, to see the sentence executed, which was pronounced, since ye would not apply it to your own hearts. O, happy is that soul that anticipats that great day of final judgment, by a previous self-judgment, and self-trial. Well then, hath the Scriptures included all under sin, that all men might be guilty, and every mouth stopt before God, Rom. 3. 19. What shall we do then? Since righteousness and justice is against us, who can plead for us? It would seem, that there could be no relaxing, no repealing, no dispensing with this Law, at least, that, if there be any thing of that kind, that righteousness and judgment can have no hand in it. Yet, behold what follows, *We have an advocate*, &c. And an Advocate his office is, to sue out the Clients right, from principles of Justice, elsewhere Christ hath the office of a Judge, here is an Advocate for the party, and both of these may have a comfortable consideration: Job. 5. 22. *The Father judgeth none, but hath committed all judgment to the Son.* And yet, here we have an Advocate with the Father, and that is, with the Father as Judge; these do not crosse one another, but to make out our abundant consolation, that one intire office of our Saviour is represented

ed under all these various notions suited to our capacity; A Judge he is; yea, his Tribunal is the highest and supreme, from which there is no appeal, the ultimate decision lyes here of all capital, or soul cases or causes. It is true, the Father doth not wholly divest himself of Judgment and Authority, in the matters of life and death, for the Gospel is his contrivance, as it was the Son's, but Christ is, as it were, substituted his Vicegerent, in the administration of the second Covenant. You read of a preparatory Tribunal erected in the Word by God the Creator, that is, of the Law, which condemns us. Now, such is the mercy and grace, and free love of God, that he hath relaxed that sentence, as to the persons, he hath not taken that advantage which in Justice he had against us, but upon some valuable consideration hath committed to the Son a royal power of prescribing new Laws of life and death, and new terms of salvation, and Christ, having at his Fathers will, satisfied the Law, in what it did threaten us, he is, as it were, in compensation of such a great service, made Lord and King both of the dead and living, Rom. 14. 9. And all things in Heaven and earth are given to him, Mat. 18. 29. Joh. 13. 3. And therefore, what ever soul is aggrieved under the accusation and charge of the Law, hath liberty, yea, and is called to it, of duty, to appeal unto this new erected Tribunal where Christ sits to dispense life, according to the terms of grace; and he may be sure, the Father,

will not judge him according to the Law, if the *Son* absolve him in the Gospel.

Now, with this it consists, that he who hath all final judgment in his hand, yet he is our *advocate* in another consideration; as we consider *God the Father* sitting upon the Tribunal of Justice, and proceeding according to the terms and tenor of his first Law, or Covenant of life and death; then *Christ* comes in, with his advocacy for poor sinners, and sustains their persons, and maintains their cause, even from the principles of Justice; he presents his satisfactory sacrifice, and pleads that we are not to be charged with that punishment that he hath suffered, because he hath indeed fulfilled our legal righteousness, and by this means, the Law's mouth is stopt, which had stopt our mouth, and the sinner is absolved, who was found guilty. Thus, you see the salvation and absolution of believers, is wonderfully secured, for there is a sentence for it, in the Court of the Gospel, pronounced by the *Son*, but lest you think he should usurp such an absolute power, then hear, that he is *an advocate* to plead out the equity and justice of it, before the very Tribunal of the Law, that the Law it self being the rule, the *Father* himself who made the Law being the Judge, the poor soul that flies unto him as a refuge, may be saved, since what is craved of us, it gets in him, and is as fully satisfied that way, as it could have been by us: therefore, that same righteousness which bids condemn the sinner,

finer, commands to save the believer in *Christ*, though a sinner. What shall a soul then fear, who shall condemn? it is *Christ* that justifieth, for he is Judge of life and death, and that is much; but it is the *Father* that justifieth, and that is more; whatsoever Tribunal you be cited unto, you may be sure; Is it the Gospel? then the *Son* is Judge. Is it the Law? then the *Son* is advocate. He will not only give life himself, but see that his *Father* do it, and warrand you from all back-hazards. Nay, before the matter shall misgive, as he comes down from off the Throne, to stand at the Bar and plead for sinners, who devolve themselves upon him, so he will not spare, if need require, to degrade himself further (if I may so say) and of an advocate become a suppliant. And truly he ceased not in the dayes of his flesh to pray for us, with strong cries and tears, Heb. 7. And now he lives still to make intercession for us. He can turn from the plea of justice, to the intercession and supplication of mercy, and if strict justice will not help him, yet grace and favour, he is sure will not disappoint him.

There is a divine contexture of justice and mercy, in the businesse of mans redemption, and there is nothing so much declares infinit wisdom, as the method, order, and frame of it. Mercy might have been shewed to sinners, in gracious and free pardon of their sins, and dispensing with the punishment due to their persons, yet the
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Lords justice and faithfulness in that first commination, might be wronged and disappointed by it, if no satisfaction should be made for such infinit offences, if the Law were wholly made void, both to the punishment, as also to the person: Therefore, in the infinit deeps of Gods wisdom there was a way found out to declare both *mercy* and *justice*, to make both to shine gloriously in this work, and indeed, that is the great wonder of men and Angels, such a conjunction, or constellation of divine attributes in one work. And indeed, it is only the most happy and favourable aspect, that we can behold the divine Majesty into; The Psalmist, *Psal. 85.* expects much good from this conjunction of the Celestial Attributes, and prognosticks salvation to be near hand, and all good things, as the immediat effect of it. There is a meeting there, as it were, of some honourable personages, *vers. 10, 11.* as are in Heaven; the meeting is strange, if you consider the parties, *mercy* and *truth*, *righteousnesse* and *peace*, if *mercy* and *peace* had met thus friendly, it had been lesse wonder, but it would seem, that *righteousness* and *truth* should stand off, or meet only to reason and dispute the businesse with *mercy*: But here is the wonder, *mercy* and *truth* meets in a friendly manner, and kisseth one another, ther's a perfect agreement and harmony amongst them, about this matter of our salvation; There was a kind of parting

parting at mans fall, but they met again at Christs birth; here is the uniting principle, *truth springing out of the earth*, because he who is *the truth & the life*, was to spring out of the earth, therefore *righteousnesse will look down from Heaven*, and countenance the businesse, and this will make all of them meet with a loving salutation.

Now, as this was the contexture of divine attributes in the businesse of redemption, so *our Lord and Saviour* taketh upon him divers names, offices, and exercises, different functions for us, because he knoweth that his Father may justly exact of man personal satisfaction, and hath him at this disadvantage, and that he might have refused to have accepted any other satisfaction from another person, therefore, he puts on the habit and form of a suppliant, and intercessour for us, and so, while he was in the flesh, he ceased not to offer up prayers and supplications with strong cries and tears, and he is said still to make intercession for us; as he learned obedience, though a Son, so he learned to be a humble suppliant, though equal with God; because our claim depends wholly on grace, he came off the bench, and stood at the bar, not only pleading, but praying for us, intreating favour and mercy to us; and then, he personats an *Advocate* in another consideration, and pleads upon termes of justice, that we be pardoned, because his Father once having accepted him in our stead, he gave a satisfaction in value equal to our debt, and

and performed all that we were personally bound to, so then, you may understand, how it is, partly an act of justice, partly an act of mercy, in God to forgive sin to believers, though indeed mercy and grace is the predominant ingredient, because love and grace was the very first rise, and spring of sending a *Saviour and Redeemer*, and so the original of that very purchase and prize, *He freely sent his Son, and freely accepted him in our stead*; but once standing in our room, justice craves that no more be exacted of us, since he hath done the businessse himself.

A sinner stands accused in his own Conscience, and before God; therefore, to the end that we get no wrong, there is a twofold Advocate given us, one in the Earth, in our Consciences, another in the Heavens with God. Christ is gone up to the highest Tribunal, where the cause receives a definitive sentence, and there he manageth it above, so that though Satan should obtrude upon a poor soul, a wrong sentence in its own conscience, and bring down a false and counterfeit Act, as it were, extracted out of the Register of Heaven, whereby to deceive the poor soul, and condemn it in it self; yet there is no hazard above, he dare not appear there, before the highest Court, for he hath already succumb'd on earth, when Christ was here, the *Prince of the world was judged and cast out*, and so he will never once put in an accusation into Heaven, because he knoweth our faithful Advocate

care is there, where nothing can passe without his knowledge and consent. And this is a great comfort, that all inferiour sentences in thy perplexed conscience, which Satan through violence hath imposed upon thee, are rescinded above in the highest Court, and shall not stand to thy prejudice, whoever thou be that desires to forsake sin, and come to *Jesus Christ*.

But how doth Christ plead? can he plead us not guilty? can he excuse, or defend our sins? no, that is not the way, that accusation of the Word and Law against us is confessed, is proven, all is undenyably clear; but he pleads satisfied, though guilty; he presents his satisfactory sacrifice, and the favour of that, perfumes Heaven, and pacifieth all: he shewes Gods bond, and discharge of the receipt of the sum of our debts, and thus, is he cleared, and we absolved. Therefore, I desire you, whoever you are that are challenged for sin, and the transgression of the Law, if ye would have a solid way of satisfaction, and peace to your consciences, take with your guiltinesse, plead not, *not guilty*, do not excuse, or extenuate, but aggravate your guilt; nay, in this you may help Satan, accuse yourselves, and say, that you know more evil in your selves, then he doth, and open that up before God, but in the meantime, consider how it is managed above, plead thou also, satisfied in *Christ*, though guilty; and so, thou may say to thy accuser, if thou hast any thing to object against

against me; why I may not be saved, though a sinner, thou must go up to the highest Tribunal to propound it, thou must come before my Judge and Advocate above, but for as much, as thou dost not appear there, it is but a lie, and a murdering lie.

Now, this is the way, that the Spirit advocates for us in our Consciences, *John 14. and 15. 26.* *paracletus* it is rendered here Advocate, there Comforter; both suit well, and may be conjoynd in one, and given to both, for both are comfortable Advocats, Christ with the Father, and the Spirit with us; Christ is gone above for it, and he sent the Spirit in his stead, as God hath a deputy-judge in man, that is, mans Conscience, so the Son our Advocate with God, hath a deputy-advocate to plead the cause in our Conscience, and this he doth, partly by opening up the Scriptures to us, and making us understand the way of Salvation in them, partly manifesting his own works, and Gods gifts in us, by a super-added light of testimony, and partly by comforting us against all outward and inward sorrows. Sometimes he pleads with the soul against Satan, *not guilty*, for Satan is a slanderous and false accuser, and cares not *calumniari fortiter ut aliquid bareat*, [to calumniate stoutly, and he knoweth something will stick. He will not only object known sins and transgressions of the Law, but his manner is, to cast a mist upon the eye of the soul, and darken all its graces, and then

then he brings forth his proceſſe, that they have no grace, no faith in Chriſt, no love to God, no ſorrow for ſin; in ſuch a caſe, its the *Spirits* office, to plead it out to our conſciences, that we are not totally guilty as we are charged, and this is not ſo much a clearing of our ſelves, as a vindication of the free gifts of God, which ly under his aſperſion and reproach. Indeed, if there be a great ſtreſſe here, and for wiſe reaſons the *Spirit* forbear to plead out this point, but leave a poor ſoul to puddle it out alone, and ſcrape its evidences together in the dark, I ſay, if thou find this too hard for thee to plead, *not guilty*, then my advice is, that ye wave and ſuſpend that queſtion, yeeld it not wholly, but rather leave it intire, and do as if it were not: ſuppoſe that article and point were gained againſt thee, what would thou do next? Certainly, thou muſt ſay, I would then ſeek grace and faith from Him who giveth liberally, I would then labour to receive Chriſt in the promiſes, I ſay, do that now, and thou taketh a ſhort and compendious way, to win thy cauſe, and overcome Satan; let that be thy ſtudy, and he hath done with it.

But in any challenge about the tranſgreſſion of the Law, or deſert of eternal wrath, the *Spirit* muſt not plead, *not guilty*, for thou muſt confeſſe that, but in as far as he driveth at a further concluſion, to drive thee away from hope and confidence, to deſpondency of ſpirit, in ſo far the *Spirit* clears up unto the conſcience that this
doth

doth no wayes follow, from that confession of guiltinesse, since there is a *Saviour* that hath satisfied for it, and invites all to come and accept him for their *Lord and Saviour*.

SERMON XXVI.

1 Joh. 2. 1. — *We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*

THERE is no settlement to the spirit of a sinner, that is once touched with the sense of his sin, and apprehension of the justice and wrath of God, but in some clear, and distinct understanding the grounds of consolation in the Gospel, and the method of salvation revealed in it. There is no solid peace-giving answer to the challenges of the Law, and thy own conscience, but in the advocacy of *Jesus Christ, the Saviour of sinners*, and therefore, the *Apostle* proposes it here, for the comfort of believers, who are incident to be surprized, through the suddenesse of sin, and often deceived by the subtilty of Satan, whose souls desires, and sincere endeavours are, to be kept from iniquity, and therefore, they are made to groan within themselves, and sometimes sadly to conclude against themselves, upon the prevailing of sin, here is

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the cordial (I say) he presents to them, *Jesus Christ* standing before the Bar of Heaven, and pleading his satisfaction, in the name of such souls, and so suing forth an exemption and discharge for them from their sins; so he presents us with the most comfortable aspect, *Christ* standing between us and Justice, the *Mediator* interposed between us and the *Father*, so that there can come no harm to such poor sinners, except it come through his sides first, and no sentence can passe against them, unlesse he succumb in his righteous cause in Heaven.

The strength of Christs Advocation for believers, consists partly, in his qualification for the office, partly in the ground and foundation of his cause. His qualification we have in this *vers.* the ground and foundation of his pleading in the next *vers.* in that *he is a propitiation for our sins*, and upon this very ground, his Advocation is both just and effectual.

Every word holds out some fittesse, and therefore every word drops out consolation to a troubled soul. [With the Father,] speaks out the relation he and we stand in to the Judge, he hath not to do with an austere and rigid Judge, that is implacable, and unsatisfiable, who will needs adhere peremptorily to the letter of the Law, for then we should be all undone, if there were not some paternal affection, and fatherly clemency and moderation in the Judge, if he were not so disposed, as to make some candid inter-
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pretation upon it, and in some manner to relax the sentence, as to our personal suffering, we could never stand before him, nor needed any Advocate appear for us: But here is the great comfort, he is *Christs Father, and our Father*, so himself told us, *Job. 20. 17. I go to my Father and your Father, and my God and your God.* And therefore we may be perswaded that he will not take advantage, even that he hath in justice of us, and though we be apprehensive of his anger, in our failings and offences, and this makes us often to be both affraid and ashamed to come to him, measuring him after the manner of men, who are soon angry, and often implacably angry, we imagine that he cannot but repell and put back our petitions, and therefore we have not the boldnesse to offer them; yet he ceaseth not to be our Father, and *Christs Father*, and if ye would have the character of a father, look *Jer. 31. 18.* how he stands affected towards ashamed and confounded Ephraim, how his bowels move, and his compassions yearn towards him, as his pleasant child: The truth is, in such a case in which we are captives against our will, and stumble against our purpose, he pities us, as a Father doth his children, knowing that we are but dust and grasse, *Psal. 103. 13, 14, 15, 16, 17.* See the excellent and sweet application of this relation, by the Psalmist, if it stir him, it stirs up rather the affection of pity, then the passion of anger, he pities his poor child when he cries out, of violence and

and oppression: And therefore, there is great hopes, that our Advocate *Jesus Christ*, shall prevail in his suits for us, because he with whom he deals, *the Father*, he loves him, and loves us, and will not stand upon strict terms of justice, but rather attempt all with mercy and love. He will certainly hear his *wellbeloved Son*, for in him he is well pleased, his soul rests and takes complacency in him, and for his sake he adopts us to be his children; and therefore he will both hear him in our behalf, and our prayers too, for his Names sake.

But this is superadded to qualifie our Advocate, *he is the Christ of God*, anointed for this very purpose, and so hath a fair and lawful calling to this office, *he takes not this honour to himself*, but was called thereto of his Father, Heb. 5. 4. As he did not make himself a Priest, so he did not intrude upon the Advocateship, but he that said, *Thou art my Son*, called him to it. If a man had never so great ability to plead in the Law, yet except he be licenciatic and graduat, he may not take upon him to plead a cause. But our Lord *Jesus* hath both skill and authority, he hath both the ability and the office, was not a self intruder, or usurper, but the Council of Heaven did licenciatic him, and graduat him for the whole office of *Mediatorship*: In which there is the greatest stay and support for a sinking soul; to know that all this frame and fabrick of the Gospel was contrived by God the Father, and

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that he is master-builder in it, since it is so, there can nothing controll it, or shake it, since it is the very will of God, with whom we have to do, that a Mediator should stand between him and us: and he hath such a mind to clear poor souls, that he freely chooseth and giveth them an able *Advocate*, it is a great token that he hath a mind to save as many as come and submit to him, and that he is ready to pardon, when he prepares so fit an *Advocate* for us, and hath not left us alone to plead our own cause.

But the anointing of Christ for it, implieth both *donum* and *potentiam*, & *potestatem*, the gifts for it, as well as the authority, and the ability, as well as the office; for God hath singularly qualified him for it, given him the Spirit above measure, *Isai.* 61. 1. He received gifts not only to distribute to men, but to exercise for men, and their advantage, *Psal.* 68. 18. And therefore the Father seems to interest himself in the cause, as it were his own, he furnisheth our *Advocate*, as if it were to plead the cause of his own justice against us, he upholds and strengthens Christ in our cause, as really as if it were his own, *Isai.* 42. 1. 6. which expresseth to us the admirable harmony and consent of Heaven to the salvation of as many as make Christ their refuge, and desire not to live in sin, though they be often soiled, yet there is no hazard of the failing of their cause above, because our *Advocate* hath both excellent skill, and undoubitable authority.

Yes,

Yea, he is so fully qualified for this, that he is called *Jesus, the Saviour*, he is such an *Advocate*, that he saves all he pleads for. The best Advocate may losse the cause, either through the weaknesse of its self, or the iniquity of the Judge, but he is the *Advocate and the Saviour*, that never saccumb'd in his undertaking for any soul, be their sins never so hainous, their accusation never so just and true, their accuser never so powerful, yet they who put their cause in his hand, who flee in hither for refuge, being wearied of the bondage of sin and Satan, he hath such a prevalency with *the Father*, that their cause cannot miscarry, even when Justice it self seems to be the opposite party, yet he hath such marvellous successe in his office, that justice shall rather meet amicably with mercy and peace, and salute them kindly, Psal. 85. 10, 11. as being satisfied by him, then he come short in his undertaking.

But there is another personal qualification needful, or all should be in vain, *Jesus the righteous*. If he were not righteous in himself, he had need of an Advocate for himself, and might not plead for sinners, but he is *righteous and holy*, no guile found in his mouth, without sin, an unblameable and unspotted high Priest, else he could not mediate for others, and such an Advocate too, else he could not plead for others, Heb. 7. 26. As this perfected his sacrifice, that he offered not for his own sins, neither needed, so this com-

pleads his Advocatship, and gives it a mighty influence for his poor Clients, that he needs not plead for himself. If then the Law cannot attach our Lord and Saviour, can lay no claim to him, or charge against him, then certainly, all that he did, behoved to be for others, and so he stands in a good capacity to plead for us before the Father, and to sue out a pardon to us, though guilty; for if the just was delivered for the unjust, and the righteous suffered for the unrighteous, much more is it consistent with the justice of the Father, to deliver and save the unrighteous and unjust sinner, for the righteous Advocats sake. If ye seek me, then let these go free, saith he, Job. 18. 8. So he in effect pleads with God his Father, O Father, if thou deal with me the righteous One, as with an unrighteous man, then, in all reason and justice, thou must deal with my poor Clients, though unrighteous, as with righteous men; If justice thought she did me no wrong to punish me the righteous, then let it not be thought a wrong to justice to pardon, absolve, and justify the unrighteous.

Now, if he be so righteous a person, it follows necessarily, that he hath a righteous cause, for an honest man will not Advocate for an unjust cause. But, how can the cause of believers be said to be righteous, when justice it self, and the Law, indites the accusation against them? Can they plead, Not guilty? Or he for them? There is a twofold righteousness, in relation to a two-

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fold rule, a righteousness of strict justice, in relation to the first Covenant, and this cannot be pleaded, that our cause is exactly conformable to the Covenant of Works, we cannot, nor *Christ* in our name, plead any thing from that, which holds forth nothing but personal obedience, or else personal satisfaction. But yet, our cause may be found to be righteous, in relation to the second Covenant, and the rule and terms of it, in as far as God hath revealed his acceptance of a surety in our stead, and hath dispensed with the rigour of the Law, according to that *new Law of grace and righteousness* contemplated together; The cause of a desperat lost sinner may sustain before the righteous Judge, and it is upon this *new account*, that he pleads for us, because he hath satisfied in our stead; and now it is as righteous and equitable with God, to shew mercy and forgiveness to believing sinners, as it is to reveal wrath and anger against impenitent sinners.

I know there will be some secret whisperings in your hearts upon the hearing of this, Oh, its true, it is a most comfortable thing for them whose Advocate he is, there is no fear of the miscarrying of their cause above, but as for me, I know not if he be an Advocate for me, whether I may come into that sentence, *We have an Advocate, &c.* I confesse it is true, he is not an Advocate for every one, for while he was here, he prayed not for the world, but them that were

given him out of the world, Joh. 17. much more will he not plead for the world, when he is above; He is rather witnessing against the unbelieving world. But yet, I believe his Advocacion is not restrained only to them that actually believe, as neither his supplication was, Job. 17. But as he prayed for them who should hereafter believe, so he still pleads for all the elect, not only to procure remission to the penitent, but repentance to the impenitent. There is one notable effect of the Advocacion and intercession of Christ, which indeed is common to the world, but particularly intended for the elect, that is, the present suspension of the execution of the curse of the Law, by vertue whereof there is liberty to offer the Gospel, and call sinners to repentance. No question, the sparing of the world, the forbearance and long-suffering of God toward sinners, is the result and fruit of our Lords intercession and advocacy in Heaven, and so even the elect have the benefit of it before they believe, but it is so provided, that they shall never sensibly know this, nor have any special comfort from it, till they believe, and so Christ doth not plead for pardon to their sins till they repent. He pleads even before we repent, but we cannot know it, yet, he pleads not that pardon be bestowed before they repent, and so the saving efficacy of his Advocacion is peculiar and proper in the application to believing souls.

Now, consider (I say) whether or not thou

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be one that finds the power of that perswasion, *my little children, I write to you that you sin not, &c.* Can thou unfeignedly say, that its the desire and indeavour of thy soul, *not to sin*, and that thou art perswaded to this, not only from the fear and terrour of God, but especially from his mercy and goodnesse in the Gospel, this is one part of the character of such as Christs advocacy is actually extended to. Moreover, being surpris'd with sin, and overcome beside thy purpose, and against thy desire, dost thou apprehend sin as thy greatest misery, and arraign thy self before the Tribunal of God, or art thou attached in thy own conscience, and the Law pleaded against thee, before the bar of thy own conscience, then, I say, according to this Scripture, thou art the soul unto whom this comfort belongs, thou art called of God, to decide the controversy in thy own conscience, by flying up, and appealing to that higher Tribunal, where *Christ is advocate*, thou may safely give over, and trust thy cause to him.

But on the other hand, O, how deplorable and irremediable is the condition of these souls, who have no cause of this kind stated within there our conscience, who are not pursued by Satan and sin, but rather at peace with them, amicably agreeing with them, acting their lusts and will; you who have no bonds upon you, to restrain you from sin, *neither the terrour of the Lord perswadeth you, nor the love of Christ con-*
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strains you ; you can be kept from no beloved sin, nor pressed to any serious and spiritual labour in Gods service, and then, when you sin, you have no accuser within, or such an one as you suppress, and suffers not to plead it out against you, or cite you before Gods Tribunal. I say unto you, and alas, many of you are such, you do not, you can not know, that you have an interest in this Advocate. You can have no benefit, nor saving advantage from Christs pleading, while you remain thus in your sins. Alas, poor souls, what will ye do ? Can you mannage your own cause alone & though you defraud and deceive your own consciences now, though ye offer violence to them, do you think so to carry it above & say, persuade your selves, you must one day appear, and none to speak for you ; God your Judge, your conscience your accuser, and Satan your tormentor standing by ; and then, wo to him that is alone, when the advocate becomes judge, in that day blest are all those that have trusted in him, and used him formerly as an Advocate against sin and Satan. But wo to them for ever, who would never suffer this cause to be pleaded, while there was an Advocate.

S. E. R.

SERMON XXVII.

1 Joh. 2. 2. *And he is the propitiation, &c.*

Here is the strength of Christs plea, and the ground of his advocacy, *that he is the propitiation.* The Advocate is the Priest, and the Priest is the Sacrifice, and in such efficacy this sacrifice hath, that the propitiatorie-sacrifice may be called the very propitiation, and pacification for sin. Here is the marrow of the Gospel, and these are the breasts of consolation, which any poor sinner might draw by faith, and bring out soul-refreshment. But truly, it comes not out, but by drawing, and there is nothing fit for that but the heart, that alone can suck out of these breasts the milk of consolation. The well of salvation in the word is deep, and many of you have nothing to draw with, you want the bucket that should be let down, that is, the affectionate meditation and consideration of the heart; and therefore, you go away empty. You come full of other cares, and desires, and delights, no empty room in your hearts for this, no soul-longings, and thirstings after the righteousness of God: and therefore, you return as you came, empty of all solid and true refreshment. Oh, that we could draw it forth to you, and then drop it into your hearts, and make it descend into your consciences.

In these words, you may consider more distinctly, who this is, and then, for whom he is made a sacrifice, and withall, the efficacy of this sacrifice, and the sufficiency. Who this is, is pointed out as with the finger, (*He is*) that is, *Jesuw Christ the righteous*. The Apostle demonstrats him as a remarkable person, as in his Evangel, the Baptist, doth. *Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the World*. And the Church, *Isa. 63. 1.* taketh a special notice of this person. *Who is this that cometh from Edom? and that which maketh him so remarkable, is his strange habit after the treading the Wine-presse of wrath alone, that he was made a bloody sacrifice to pacifie God, and to shew you, how notable a person he is, he is signally, and eminently pointed out by the Father, Isa. 42. 1. Behold my servant, &c.* As if he would have the eyes of all men fixed upon him, with wonder and admiration; and for this end, he singled him out from the multitude, by a voice from heaven, which testified unto him particularly, *this is my wellbeloved Son, hear him*. Therefore the Apostle had reason to say, *2 Cor. 5. 14.* That he is *One for all*, so notable an one, that he may serve for all; He stands in more value, in the compe of God, then all mankind; all creatures are Cyphers, which being never so much multiplied, come to nothing, amount not beyond nothing, but set him before them, put *Christ* on the head of them, and he signifies more then they all do, and gives

gives them all some estimation in the computation. And so they stand in *Pauls* calculation, *Phil. 3.* which he makes with very great assurance and confidence, yea doubtlesse I count all dung, but the superexcellent knowledge of *Christ*. *Christ* is only the figure, that hath signification, and gives signification to other things.

But in this businesse, the consideration of the persons interessed, (*he*, and *us*,) maketh us behold a great Emphasis in the Gospel: *he*, a propitiation, and that for our sins, is a strange combination of wonders. If it had been some other person, lesse distant from us, that were thus given for us, and standing in our room, then we would have better understood the exchange. Things of like worth, to be thus shuffled together, and stand in one anothers place, is not so strange. But between the persons mentioned, *him*, and *us*, there is such an infinite distance, that it is wonderful, how the one descends to the room of the other, to become a sacrifice for us. O, that we could expresse this to our own hearts, with all the Emphasis that it hath; *He*, the Lord, and *we*, the servants; *he*, the King, and *we*, the poor beggers; *He*, the brightnesse of his Fathers glory, and *we*, the shame and ignominy of the whole creation; *he*, counting it no robbery to be equal with God, and bring in the form of God, and *we*, not equal to the worth of creatures, because of sin, and being in the form of devils. Had it been a holy, and righte-

ous man for sinners, it had been a strange enough exchange; but *He* is not only *holy* and *harmlesse*, but *higher then the heavens*. O, what a vast descent was this, from heaven to earth, from a Lord to a servant, from an eternal Spirit, to mortal flesh, from God to creatures, and to descend thus far, for such persons, not only unworthy in themselves, such as could not conciliate any liking, but such as might procure loathing, as is described, *Ezek. 16.* and *Rom. 5. 6.* and *1 Pet. 3. 18.* While we were enemies, and might have expected a commissioner from heaven, with vengeance against us. Behold, how the mysterious designe of love breaks up, and opens it self to the world, in sending his own Son for us; and this is exceedingly aggravated, from the absolute freedom of it, that there was nothing to pre-engage him to it, but infinite impediments in the way to dissuade him; many impediments of his affection, and many difficulties to his power, and then, no gain nor advantage to be expected from such creatures, notwithstanding of such an undertaking for them.

Now, herein is the strongest support of faith, and the greatest incentive to love, and the mightiest perswasive to obedience, that can be. I say, the strongest support of faith; for, a soul apprehending the greatnesse and hainousnesse of sin, and the inviolablenesse of Gods righteousness, with the purity of his holinesse, can hardly be persuaded, that any thing can compen-

infinite wrong that is done to his Majesty, though ordinarily the small and superficial apprehension of sin, makes a kind of facility in this, or an empty credulity of the Gospel. The reason why most men do not question and doubt of the Gospel, and of their acceptance before God, is not because they are stablished in the faith, but rather because they do not so seriously and deeply believe, and ponder their own sins, and Gods holiness; which if many did, they would find it a greater difficulty to attain to a solid and quieting perswasion of the grounds of the Gospel: they would find much ado to settle that point, of the readinesse of God to pardon and accept sinners. But now, I say, all this difficulty, and these clouds of doubts, will evanish at the bright appearance of this *Sun of Righteousnesse*, that is, at the solid consideration of the glorious excellency of him that was given a ranfome for us, herein the soul may be satisfied, that God is satisfied, when he considers what a person hath undertaken it, even *Jesus the righteous, the only Son of God, in whom his soul delighteth*, whose glorious divine Majesty puts the stamp of infinite worth upon all his sufferings, and raiseth up the dignity of the sacrifice, beyond the sufferings of all creatures: For there are two things needful, for the full satisfaction of a troubled soul, that apprehends the hainousnesse of sin, and height of wrath: nothing can calm and settle this storm, but the appearance of two things; First, of Gods

willing.

willingnesse and readinesse to pardon sin, and save sinners; Next, of the answerablenesse of a ransom to his Justice, that so, there may be no impediment in his way to forgive. Now, let this once be established in thy heart, that such an one, so beloved of God, and so equal to God, is the propitiation for our sins, that God hath sent his only begotten Son, for this very businesse, unrequited, and unknown of us; then, there is the clearest demonstration of these two things, that can be, of the love of God, and of the worth of the ransom. What difficulty can be supposed in it, actually to pardon thy heinous sins, when his love hath overcome infinit greater difficulties; to send one, his own Son, to procure pardon, John 3. Certainly, it cannot but be the very delight of his heart to forgive sins, since he spared not his Son, to purchase it; since he hath had such an everlasting design of love, which broke out in Christs coming, and then, such a person he is, that the merit of his sufferings, cannot but be an valuable and sufficient compensation to justice, for our personal exemption, because he is one above all, of infinite highnesse; and therefore, his lownesse hath an infinite worth in it, of infinite fulnesse, and therefore his emptinesse is of infinite price; of infinite glory, and so, his shame is equivalent to the shame and malediction of all mankind. So then, whatsoever thou apprehend of thy own sins, or Gods holinesse, that seemeth to render thy pardon difficult, lay but in the balance

lance with that, first, the free and rich expreſſion of the infinite love of God, in ſending ſuch an one for a ranſome, and ſure, that ſpeaks as much to his readineſſe and willingneſſe, as if a voice ſpoke it juſt now from heaven; and then, to take away all ſcruple, lay the infinite worth of his perſon, who is *the propitiation*, with thy ſins, and he will certainly out-weigh them; ſo that, thou may be fully quieted, and ſatisfied in that point, that it is as eaſie for him to pardon, as for thee to confeſſe ſin, and aſk pardon: nay, that he is more ready to give it thee, then thou to aſk it.

But in the next place, I deſire you to look upon this, as the greateſt incentive of affection: O, how ſhould it inflame your hearts to conſider, that ſuch an one became a ſacrifice for our ſins; to think that Angels hath not ſuch a word, to comfort themſelves withal; theſe innumerable companies of Angels, who left their ſtation, and were once in dignity above us, hath not ſuch glad tidings to report one to another in their ſocieties, as we have; they cannot ſay, *he is the propitiation for our ſins*. This is the wonderful myſtery, that *blessed Angels* deſire to look into, they gaze upon it, and fix the eyes of their admiration upon *God* manifeſted in the fleſh, wondering at the choice of mortal man, before immortal ſpirits, that he is a ranſome for them, and not for their own brethren, who left their ſtation; how ſhould this endear him to our ſouls, and his will

to our hearts, who bath so loved us, and given himself for us; Hath he given himself for us, and should we deny our selves to him, especially when we consider what an infinit disparity is between the worth, and difference in the advantage of us he gave his blessed self, a sacrifice, he offered himself to death for us, not to purchase any thing to himself, but life to us, and what is it he requires? but your base and unworthy self, to offer up your lusts and sins in a sacrifice, by mortification, and your hearts and affections, in a thanksgiving-offering, wherein your own greatest gain lyes too: for this is truly to find and save your selves, thus to quite your selves to him.

The efficacy of this is holden out in the word, *propitiation for our sins*, the vertue of Christs sacrifice is to pacifie Justice, and make God propitious, that is, favourable and merciful to sinners. In which there are three considerable things imported, one is, that sin is the cause of enmity between God and man, and sets us at an infinit distance, that sin is a hainous provocation of his wrath; another is expressed, that *Christ is the propitiation*, in opposition to that provocation, he pacifies wrath, and then conciliats favour, by the sacrifice of himself; all the expressions of the Gospel, import the damnable and deplorable estate that sin puts man into: *Reconciliation* imports the standing enmity and feid between God and men, *Propitiation* imports the provocation of the holy and just indignation of God against man,

man, the sewel whereof is our sins: *Justification* implyes the lost and condemned estate of a sinner, under the sentence and curse of the Law; all that is in the Gospel minds us of our original, of the forlorn estate he found us into, none pitying us, nor able to help us. I would desire that this might first take impression on your hearts, that sin sets *God and men* at infinit distance, and not only distance, but disaffection and enmity, it hath sown the seeds of that wofull discord, and kindled that contention, which if it be not quenched by *the blood of Christ*, will burn to everlasting, so that none can dwell with it, and yet sinners must dwell in it, there is a provoking quality in it, fit to alienat the holy heart of *God*, and to incense his indignation, which when once it is kindled, *who can stand before it*? Do but consider what you conceive of wrongs done to you, how they stir your passions, and provoke your patience, so that there is much adoe to get you pacified; and what hainousnesse must then be in your offences against *God*, both in regard of number and kind? Oh, that you could but impartially weigh this matter, you would find, that in the view of *God*, all wrongs and injuries between men evanish. *Against thee alone have I sinned*; that relation and respect of sin to *God*, exhausts all other respects of injuries towards men. It is true, that his Majesty is free from passion, and is not commoved and troubled as your spirits are; yet such is the provoking nature of sin, that it cries for vengeance, and brings a sinner under the dread-

full sentence of divine wrath, which he both pronounceth, and can execute, without any inward commotion or disturbance of spirit. But, because we conceive of him after our manner, therefore he speaks in such terms to us. But that which he would signify by it, is that the sinner is in as dreadful and damnable a condition by sin, as if the Lord were mightily inflamed with anger and rage; the just punishment is as due and certain, as if he were subject to such passions as we are, and so much the more certain, that he is not. Now, I desire you to consider, how mightily the hainoutnesse of sin is aggravated, partly, by the quality of the persons, and partly, by the consideration of his benefits to us. A great man resents a light wrong heavily, because his person makes the wrong heavier. O, what do you think the *most High* should do, considering his infinite distance from us, his glorious Majesty, and greatness, his pure holiness, his absolute power and supremacy, what vile and abominable characters of presumptions and rebellion do all these imprint upon disobedience? Shall he suffer himself to be despised and neglected of men, when there is no petty creature above another, but he will be jealous of his credit, and vindicate himself from contempt? and then, when ingratitude is mingled in with rebellion, it makes sin exceeding sinful; and sinful sin exceeding provoking, to proclaim open war against the holy and righteous will of him, whom we owe our selves to, and all that we are, or have. To do evil, because he is good, and be unthankful, because he is kind, to take all his

his own members, faculties, creatures, and imploy them as instruments of dishonour against himself, there is here seed for feeding everlasting indignation; there is no indignity, no vilenesse, no wickednesse to this; all the provocations of men, how just soever, are in the sight of this, groundless and vain, like a childs indignation; all are but imaginary injuries, consisting but in opinion, in regard of that which sin hath in the bosome of it against God.

But, how shall any satisfaction be made for the injury of sin? What shall pacifie his justly deserved anger? Here is the question indeed, that would have driven the whole world to a *nonplus*, if once the Majesty and holinesse of God had been seen. But the ignorance of Gods greatnesse, and mens sinfulness, made the world to fancy some expiations of sin, and satisfactions to God, partly, by sacrifices of beasts, partly, by prayer, and repentance for sins.

SERMON XXVIII.

1 Joh. 2. 3. *And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.*

THis age pretends to much knowledge, beyond former ages, knowledge, I say, not only in other natural Arts and Sciences, but especially in Religion; whether there be any great advancement in other knowledge, and improvement of that which was, to a further extent and clearnesse,

I cannot judge; but, I believe, there is not much of it in this Nation, nor do we so much pretend to it. But, we talk of the enlargements of divine knowledge, and the breaking up of a clearer light, in the point of Religion, in respect of which, we look on former times, *as the times of ignorance and darknesse, which God winked at.* If it were so indeed, I should think the time happy, and bless the days we live into, for as many lowre and sad accidents as they are mixed withal: Indeed, if the variety of Books, and multiplicity of discourses upon Religion, if the multitude of disputes about points of truth, and frequency of Sermons, might be held for a sufficient proof of this pretension, we should not want store enough of knowledge and light. But, I fear that this is not the touch-stone of the Holy Ghost, according to which we may try the truth of this assertion; that this is not the rule, by which to measure either the truth, or degrees of our knowledge; but for all that, we may be lying buried in Egyptian-darkness, and while such a light seems to shine about us, our hearts may be a dungeon of darkness, of ignorance of God, and unbelief, and our ways and walk full of stumblings in the darkness. I am led to intertain these sad thoughts of the present times, from the words of the Apostles, which gives us the designation of a true Christian, to be the knowledge of God; and the character of his knowledge, to be obedience to his commands; if according to this levell, we take the estimate of the proportion of our knowledge and light, I am afraid lest there be found as much

ignorance

ignorance of God, and darkness, as we do foolishly fancy that we have of light. However, to find it, will be some breaking up of light in our hearts, and to discover how little we know indeed upon a solid account, will be the first morning Star of that *Sun of Righteousnesse*, which will shine more and more to the perfect day. Therefore we shall labour to bring our light, to the lamp of this word, and our knowledge, to this testimony of unquestionable authority, that having recourse to the *Law and the Testimony*, we may find if there be light in us, or so much light as men think they see; If we could but open our eyes to the shining light of this Scripture, I doubt not, but we should be able to see that which few do see, that is, that much of the pretended light of this age, is darkness and ignorance. I do not speak of errors only, that come forth in the garments of new light, but especially, of the vulgar knowledge of the truth of Religion, which is far adulterated from the true metal & stamp of divine knowledge, by the intermixture of the grosse darknesse of our affections and conversation; as that other is from the naked truths; and therefore both of them are found light in the ballance of the Sanctuary, and counterfeited by this touch-stone of obedience.

To make out this examination the better, I shall endeavour to open these three things unto you, which comprehend the words; 1. That the knowledge of God in *Jesus Christ*, is the most proper designation of a Christian; hereby we know that we know him, which is as much as to say, that we are true Christians. 2. That the proper character of

true knowledge, is obedience, or conscionable practising of what we know; And then lastly, that the only estimat or trial of our estate before God, is made according to the appearance of his work in us, and not by immediat thrusting our selves into the secrets of Gods hidden decrees; *Hereby we know, &c.* Here then in a narrow circle we have all the work and business of a Christian, his direct and principal duty is, to know God, and keep his commands, which are not two distinct duties, as they come in a religious consideration, but make up one compleat work of Christianity, which consists in conformity to God. Then the reflex, and secondary duty of a Christian, which makes much for his comfort, is, *to know that he knows God: To know God, and keep his commands, is a thing of indispensable necessity to the being of a Christian, to know that we know him, is of great concernment, to the comfort and well-being of a Christian; without the first, a man is as miserable as he can be; without the sense and feeling of misery, because he wants the spring and fountain of all happiness; without the second, a Christian is unhappy indeed for the present, though he may not be called miserable, because he is more happy then he knows of, and only unhappy, because he knows not his happiness.*

For the first then, knowledge is a thing so natural to the spirit of a man, that the desire of it is restless, and unsatiable; there is some appetite of it in all men, though in the generality of people (because of immersedness in earthly things, and the predominancy of corrupt lusts and affections, which

which hinder most mens souls to wait upon that more noble inquiry after knowledge, in which only a man really differs from a beast) there be little or no stirring that way; yet some finer spirits there are, that are unquiet this way, and with *Solomon*, give themselves, and apply their hearts to search out wisdom. But, this is the curse of mans curiosity at first, in seeking after unnecessary knowledge, when he was happy enough already, and knew as much of God and his works, as might have been a most satisfying intertainment of his spirit; I say, for that wretched aim, we are to this day deprived of that knowledge which man once had, which was the ornament of his nature, and the repast of his soul; as all other things are subdued under a curse for sin, so especially this which man had, is lost, in seeking that which he needed not, and the craft of it is so obscured and perplex'd, the footsteps of it are so undiscernable, and the way of it is like a Bird in the Air, or a Ship in the Sea, leaving us few helps to find it out, that most part of men lose themselves in seeking to find it: And therefore, in all the inquiries and searching of men after the knowledge even of natural things, that come under our view, there is at length nothing found out remarkable, but the increase of sorrow, and the discovery of ignorance, as *Solomon* saith, *Eccles. 1. 18.* This is all the Jewel that is brought up from the bottom of this Sea, when men dive deepest into it, for the wisest of men could reach no more, though his bucket was as long as any mans. *Chap. 7. 23.* I said, I will be wise, but it was far

from me: that which is far off, and exceeding deep, who can find it out? Knowledge hath taken a far journey from mans nature, and hath not left any prints behind it to find it out again, but, as it were, hath flown away in an instant, and therefore, we may ask with *Job*, 28. ver. 1. 12 Surely there is a vein for the silver, &c. But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding? What Utopian Isles hath she transported unto? that mortal men, the more they seek her, they find more ignorance, the further they pursue, they see themselves at the further distance; thus it is in these things that are most obvious to our senses, but how much more, in spiritual and invisible things, is our darkness increased, because of the dulness and earthiness of our spirits, that are clogged with a lump of flesh; for God himself that should be the *primum intelligibile* of the soul, the first and principal object, whose glorious light should first strike into our hearts, *Job* testifies how little a portion is known of him, when we cannot so much as understand the thunder of his power, that makes such a sensible impression on our ears, and makes all the world to stand and hearken to it, then how much less shall we conceive the invisible Majesty of God? in natural things we have one vail of darkness in our minds to binder us; but in the apprehension of God, we have a twofold darkness to break through, the darkness of ignorance in us, and the darkness of too much light in him. *Caliginem nimiam lucis*, which makes him as inaccessible to us, as the other; the over-proportion of that glorious Majesty of God,

God, to our low spirits, being as the Sun in its brightness, to a night-Owl, which is dark midnight to it. Hence is it, that these holy men who know most of God, think they know least, because they see more to be known, but infinitely surpassing knowledge; pride is the daughter of ignorance only, and he that thinketh he knoweth any thing, knoweth nothing as he ought to know, saith the Apostle, 1 Cor. 8. 2. For he that knoweth not his own ignorance, if he know never so much, is the greatest ignorant, and it is a manifest evidence that a man hath but a superficial touch of things, and hath never broken the shell; or drawn by the vail of his own weakness and ignorance, that doth not apprehend deeply, the *unsearchableness of God*, and his mysteries; but thinketh he hath in some measure compassed them, because he maketh a systeme of divinity, or setteth down so many conclusions of faith, and can debate them against adversaries, or because he hath a form and model of divinity, as of other sciences, in his mind. Nay, my beloved, holy Job attained to the deepest and fullest speculation of God, when he concluded this, *because I see thee, I abhor my self*; and as Paul speaks, *If any man love God, he is known of God, and so knowes God*, 1 Cor. 8. 3. From which two testimonies I conclude, that the true knowledge of God, consists not so much in a comprehension of all points of divinity, as in such a serious apprehension and conception of the Divine Majesty, as inkindles and inflames these two affections, *love and hatred* towards their proper objects; such knowledge as carries the torch before the affecti-

on; such a light as shines into the heart, as Pauls phrase it, 2 Cor. 4. 6. and so transmits heat and warmnesse into it, till it make the heart burn in the love of God, and loathing of himself; as long as a man doth but hear of God in sermons, or read of him in books, though he could determine all the questions and problems in divinity, he keeps a good conceit of himself, and that knowledge puffeth up, and swells a man into a vain tumor, the venome of poyson blowes him up full of wind, and self-confidence, and commonly they who doubt least, are not the freest of error, and misapprehension; and truly, whoever seriously reflects upon the difficulty of knowledge, and darknesse of mens minds, and the general curse of vanity, and vexation that all things are under, so that what is wanting cannot be numbered, nor that which is crooked made straight, he cannot but look upon too great confidence, and peremptoriness in all points, as upon a race at full speed, in the dark night, in a way full of pits and snarcs; oftentimes our confidence shewes not from evidence of truth, but the ignorance of our minde, and is not so much built upon the strength of reason, as the strength of our passions, and weakness of our judgments.

But when once a man comes to see God, and know him in a lively manner, then he sees his own weakness, and vilenesse in that light, and cryes out with *Isaiah*, *Wo is me, I am a man of polluted lips*, and he discerns in that light, the amiableness and loveliness of God, that ravisheth his heart after it, and then as *Jeremiah* saith, *He will not glory in*

riches, or strength, or beauty, or wisdom, but only in this, that he hath at length gotten some discovery of the only fountain of happinesse, then he will not think so much of tongues & languages, of prophecies, of all knowledge of controversies, neither gifts of body nor of mind, nor external appendances of providence, will much affect him, he could be content to trample on all these, to go over them in-considerately, and enjoyment of God himself.

If we search the Scriptures, we shall find that they do not entertain us with many and subtil discourses of Gods nature, and decrees, and properties, nor do they insist upon the many perplexed questions, that are made concerning Christ and his offices, about which so many volumnes are spun out, to the infinit distraction of the Christian world; they do not pretend to satisfy your curiosity, but to edifie your souls; and therefore they hold out God in Christ, as cloathed with all his relations to mankind, in all these plain and easie properties, that concern us everlastingly, his justice, mercy, grace, patience, love, holinesse, and such like. Now, hence I gather, that the true knowledge of God, consists not in the comprehension of all the conclusions that are deduced, and controversies that are discussed about these things, but rather, in the serious and solid apprehension of God, as he hath relation to us, and consequently in order and reference to the moving of our hearts, to love, and adore, and reverence him, for he is holden out only, in these garments that are fit to move, and affect our hearts. A man may know all these things, and yet not know

God himself, for to know him, cannot be abstracted from loving of him, they that know thy Name will trust in thee, and so love thee, and so fear thee, for its impossible but that this will be the natural result, if he be but known indeed; because there is no object more amiable, more dreadful withall, and more eligible, and worthy of choice, and therefore, seeing infinit beauty and goodnesse, and infinit power and greatnesse, and infinit sufficiency and fulnesse, are combined together with infinit truth, the soul that apprehends him indeed, cannot but apprehend him as the most ravishing object, and the most reverend too; and if he do not find his heart suitably affected, it is an evident demonstration, that he doth not indeed apprehend him, but an idol. The infinit light, and the infinit life, are simply one, and he that truly without a dream, sees the one, cannot but be warmed and moved by the other.

So then by this account of the knowledge of God, we have a clear discovery that many are destitute of it, who pretend to it. I shall only apply it to two sorts of persons, one is, of them who have it only in their memories, another, of them who have it only in their mindes or heads. Religion was once the legitimat daughter of judgment and affection, but now, for the most part, it is only adopted by mens memories, or fancies; the greatest part of the people, cannot go beyond the repetition of the Catechism or Creed, not that I would have you to know more. But you do not understand that, only ye repeat words, without the sen-

fible knowledge of the meaning of it, so that if the same matter be disguised with any other form of words, you cannot know it, which sheweth, that you have no familiarity with the thing it self, but only with the letters and syllables that are the garments of it. And for others that are of greater capacity, yet apace, it comes not down to the heart, to the affecting and moulding and forming of it; a little light shines into the mind, but your hearts are shut up still, and no window in them: Corrupt affections keep that Garison against the power of the Gospel; That light hath no heat of love, or warmesse of affection with it, which sheweth, that it is not a ray or beam of the *Sun of righteousness* which is both beautiful for light, and beneficial for influence, on the cold and dead frozen hearts of mankind, and by its approaching, makes a spring-time in the heart.

But all men pretend to know God, such is the self-love of mens hearts, that it makes them blind in judging themselves; therefore, the Holy Ghost, as he designs a Christian by the knowledge of God, so he characterizeth knowledge by keeping the *Commandments*; hereby we know, &c. So that Religion is not defined by a number of opinions, or by such a certain collection of such articles of faith, but rather by practice and obedience to the known will of God. For as I told you, knowledge is a relative duty, that is instrumental to something else, and by any thing I can see in Scripture, is not principally intended for it self, but rather for obedience; There are some sciences also

either speculative, that rest and are compleat in the meer knowledge of such objects, as some natural sciences are. But others are practical, that make a further reference of all things they cognosce upon, to some practice, and operation. Now, perhaps some may think, that the Scripture or divinity, is much of it meerly contemplative, in regard of many mysteries infolded in it, that seem nothing to concern our practice. I confesse much of that, that is raised out of the Scriptures, is such, and therefore it seems a deviation and departure from the great scope, and plain intent of the simplicity and easinesse of the Scriptures; to draw forth with much industry, and subtilty many things of meer speculation and notion, dry and saplesse to the affection, and unedifying to our practice, and so obtrude these upon other mens consciences, as points of Religion. I rather think, that all that is in the Scriptures, either directly hath the practice of Gods will for the object of it, or is finally intended for that end; either it is a thing that prescribeth our obedience, or else it tends principally to ingage our affections, and secure our obedience; and so these strains of elevate discourses of God, his nature, and properties, of his works, and all the mysteries infolded in it, are directed towards this end, farther then meer knowing of them, to ingage the heart of a believer to more love, and reverence, and adoration of God, that so he may be brought more easily, and steadily to a sweet complacency, and harmonious agreement to the will of God, in all his wayes. Nay, to say a little more,

there

there are sundry Physical, or Natural contemplations of the works of God in Scripture, but all these are divinely considered, in reference to the ravishment of the heart of man, with the wisdom, and power, and goodnesse of God, and this shewes us the notable art of Religion, to extract affection and obedience to God, out of all natural contemplations; and thus true divinity ingraven on the soul, is a kind of mistress-science, *architectonica scientia*, that serves it self of all other disciplines, of all other points of knowledge, be they never so remote from practice, in their proper sphere, and never so dry and barren, yet a religious and holy heart, can apply them to these divine uses of engaging it self further to God, and his obedience: as the Lord himself teacheth us; *Who would not fear thee, O King of Nations*, Jer. 10. *And fear ye not me who have placed the sand*, &c. Jer. 5. 22. So praise is extracted, Psal. 105. And admiration, vers. 1. 33. So submission and patience under Gods hand often pressed in *Job*, therefore if we only seek to know these things, that we may know them, that we may discourse on them, we disappoint the great end, and scope of the whole Scriptures, and we debase and degrade spiritual things, as far as Religion exalts natural things, in the spiritual use: we transform it into a carnal, empty, and dead letter, as Religion, where it is truly, spiritualizeth earthly and carnal things, into a holy use, &c.

F I N I S.